

# MIGHT AND MAIN

## LIBRARY

### STORIES OF BOYS WHO SUCCEED

*Issued Weekly. By subscription, \$2.50 per year. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1906, in the office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D.C. Application made for entry as Second-class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by THE WINNER LIBRARY CO., 165 West Fifteenth St., New York, N. Y.*

No. 42

NEW YORK, DECEMBER 8, 1906.

Price, Five Cents

## FRANK MARVIN'S SEARCH

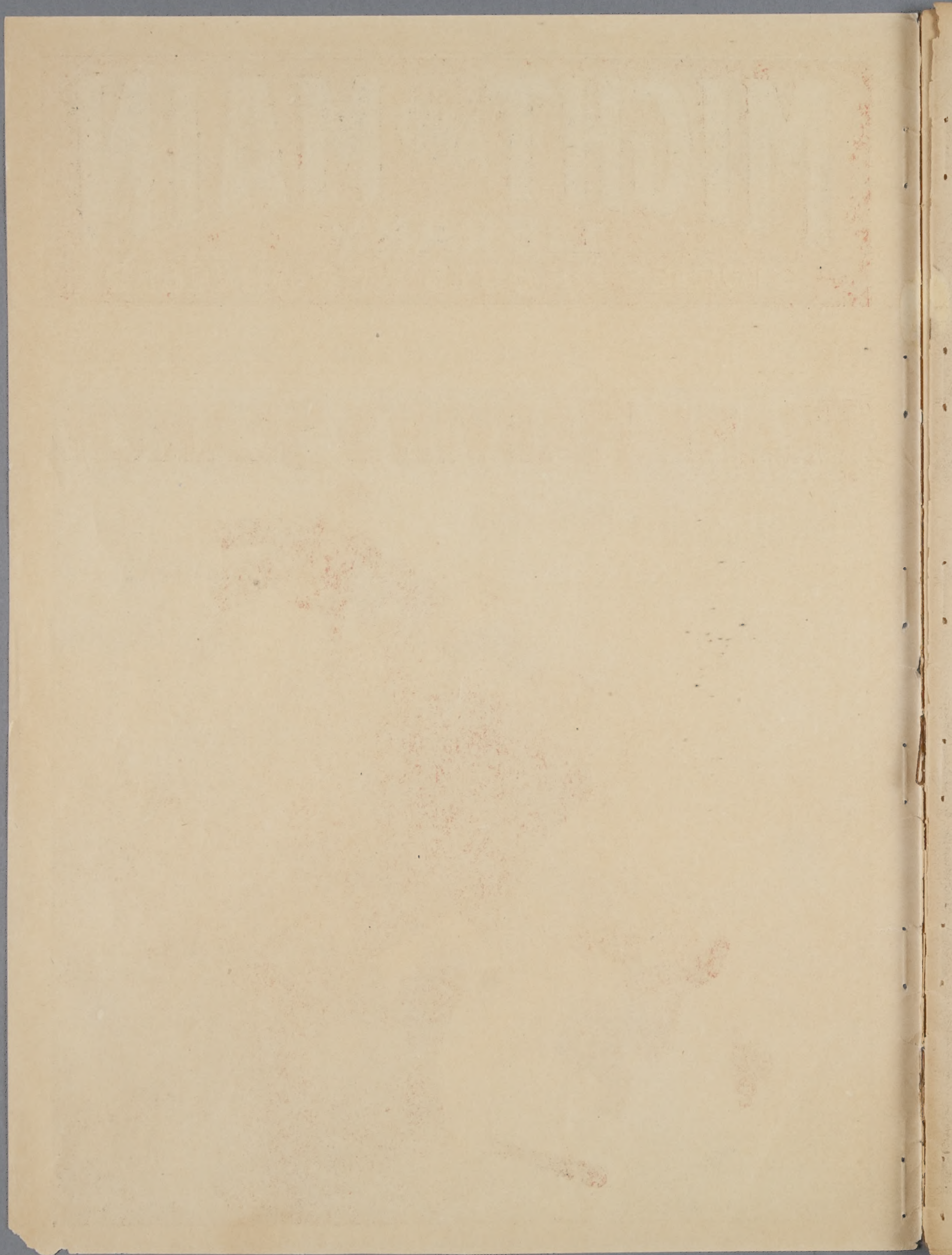
OR  
THE BROOKVILLE BOY'S CLUB



BY "ONE OF THE BOYS"

With a cry of alarm and dismay, Frank Marvin fell to the waters of the river many feet below.







# MIGHT AND MAIN LIBRARY STORIES OF BOYS WHO SUCCEED

*Issued Weekly. By subscription, \$2.50 per year. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1906, in the office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D.C.  
Application made for entry as Second-class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by THE WINNER LIBRARY CO., 165 West Fifteenth St., New York, N. Y.*

No. 42.

NEW YORK, December 8, 1906.

Price Five Cents.

## Frank Marvin's Search;

OR,

## The Brookville Boys' Club.

By "ONE OF THE BOYS."

### CHAPTER I.

#### A QUEER ADVENTURE.

"Say, boy, come here."

The speaker was one of two men who stood on the bank of a narrow but rapidly rolling river one bright July morning, and his words were addressed to a boy who had just seated himself on a grassy plat on the opposite side of the stream.

The scene was a far Western one, and shut in by towering hills and majestic forests in the near distance. The spot where the three persons mentioned were visible, however, was one of the rarest sylvan beauty, and showed the river winding in and out the lovely valley mile after mile like a gleaming band of purest silver.

Instantly the boy, who had heard the call, arose to his feet, disengaged a knapsack from his shoulders, and advanced to the edge of the water. A bold, independent spirit and a comical expression showed in his face as he sang out:

"I can't very well 'come here' without swimming."

"That's all right. I only wanted to ask you a question."

"Go ahead."

"Did you come down the river road?"

"Ten miles since morning, yes."

"Have you met any one?"

"Not a person."

The questioner was a gruff-voiced, coarse-faced man, and wore heavy top-boots and carried a gun in his hand.

His companion was a pale, anxious-looking man, and kept scanning the thickets and underbrush about them nervously.

"He must have come this way," he remarked.

"It seems so, but the boy says he hasn't seen any one."

"Are you sure of that, boy?" asked the man who had not spoken to him before.

"Yes, sir."

"Not a man sort of ragged and looking wild and crazy-like?"

"No. The road has been as silent and deserted as a Kansas prairie."

Both men looked disappointed, and were silently reflective for some moments.

The boy's curiosity was aroused by their manner, and he ventured a question.

"Hunting for some one?" he asked.

"Yes."

"The man you describe, I suppose?"

"Exactly; and it's ten dollars to you if you find him."

"Who is he?"

"He's a lunatic—a very dangerous man—and he's escaped from the asylum down at Monmouth," hastily explained the younger of the two men.

"Oh, that's it!" remarked the boy. "I hope you may catch him if he's as bad as that."

The boy dismissed the episode from his attention as the two men proceeded down the river, glancing searchingly at every thicket they came to.

He reseated himself on the grass, and, opening his knapsack, took from it some crackers and cheese, proceeded to make a comfortable meal on it, and then, going to the stream, washed it down with a long, cooling drink from the sparkling waters of the river.

A stranger would have been puzzled to determine the boy's position in society and avocation from a glance at



his open, handsome features and the knapsack and other articles which lay on the ground around him.

His face was brown and weather-beaten, his hands showed the marks of hard labor, and his attire was worn and patched.

For all this he seemed to be neither a drudge nor an object of charity, for the pleasant look he bestowed on a coil of wire, some hoop-iron, and a small emery-wheel at his side showed that they comprised his stock in trade, and that his occupation was a congenial one.

More than that, his cheery manner and happy smile betokened a clear conscience, and the jingle of coins in his pocket kept time to the careless melody his clear whistle sent echoing down the valley.

He busied himself in arranging the keys in the knapsack and tying the wire more securely.

"What a juvenile 'jack-of-all-trades' I am!" he laughed, as he finally fitted the emery-wheel to a little portable wooden stand and turned the handle, to see that it was in working order. "Last night I earned my supper and lodging by mending a broken hoe and rake for a farmer, and this morning my breakfast at Monmouth wiring up some loose trellises in a garden. I have been fifteen days on the road, and I've traveled a fair number of miles; I've saved the railroad-fare, learned a heap about the country, and have enjoyed myself immensely. Let me see how the earnings stand since I started on my tramp."

The boy drew a long leather pouch from his pocket and became absorbed in reckoning its contents. It was well filled with dimes and quarters, and there were several dollar pieces among the mass.

"Nearly twenty dollars," he murmured. "Why, at this rate I'll have a hundred dollars before I reach my destination. What's that?"

He secreted the money quickly and turned as he heard, or imagined he heard, an unmistakably suspicious sound in the thick growth of tall, heavy bushes behind him.

He had known some experience in the rough, thieving way of tramps and roadway wanderers, and he listened intently as his ear caught the sound of hurried, yet cautious, footsteps approaching the place where he was.

Almost immediately, before he could arise to his feet, a form broke through the cover.

It was that of a man arrayed in tattered garments of the most wretched description and possessed of a thin, haggard face, a wild, excited manner, and eyes that bore a haunted, yet threatening, expression that fairly frightened the boy.

One hand was thrust into the breast of his ragged coat, and seemed to convulsively clutch some object concealed there.

The boy got ready to spring to his feet and defend himself, or fly, as a quick thought flashed over his mind.

He did not doubt but that the miserable being before him was the very person the two men he had just seen across the river were looking for.

The stranger paused abruptly as he caught a full glance of the boy. Then his startled manner subsided somewhat, and he sank to the green sward with a sigh of weariness and relief.

"What are you doing here?" he asked, in a husky, tremulous voice. "Who are you?"

"Resting. My name is Frank Marvin and I'm traveling to the East."

"On foot?"

"Yes."

The boy was somewhat reassured at the man's rational manner; still, he kept a close watch on his movements as he began to tie the wheel to his knapsack preparatory to resuming his journey.

The stranger watched him curiously.

"Hold on!" he cried, after a pause. "What's that?"

"This wheel?"

"Yes."

"It's a scissors-grinder."

"Do you use it?"

"Yes, indeed. That's how I earn my living."

"Grind that."

The stranger had made a sudden movement and spoke in a quick, hoarse tone that made Frank Marvin draw back, startled.

He had drawn a long, blunt carving-knife from his breast and extended it toward the amazed boy in a peremptory and almost fierce manner.

Frank hesitated, but did not give himself time to think, as he saw a dark frown gather on the stranger's face at his delay.

He did not now doubt that the man was insane, although probably temporarily rational.

He remembered having read somewhere that the safest way to deal with such people was to accede to their wishes.

"Are you going to sharpen my knife for me?" demanded the man, in an angry, quarrelsome tone.

"Oh, certainly—certainly!" Frank hastened to reply.

He did not like his task, and tried to devise some means of getting out of completing it.

For all he knew, the man might decide to make him his first victim with the keen blade, and, at all events, it furnished him with a dangerous weapon to resist arrest.

He found no opportunity, however, to procrastinate, or abandon his work, for the stranger watched him with a glance that was almost ravenous.

The sparks flew from the wheel as Frank turned it with one hand and pressed the knife-blade against it with the other.

He managed to put a very dull point and edge upon it, and at last handed it to the stranger.

The latter uttered a gleeful, satisfied chuckle, and muttered quite audibly:

"They won't catch me now without some trouble!"

Frank began to pack up his kit of tools, as he called them, and finally arose to his feet.

"See here," spoke the stranger, "you say your name is Frank Marvin?"

"Yes, sir."

"And where do you live?"

"Nowhere at present."

"Well, I want you to write down for me your name and the place where I will be likely to find you at some future time."

"What for?" inquired the surprised boy.

"Because I want to pay you for what you have done for me, and I haven't got any money with me."

"Oh, I don't mind that."

"But I do," persisted the man. "I don't forget a kindness. I'm in trouble and need friends, but everybody seems against me. I'll make you rich some day, boy, see if I don't."

Frank thought it best to humor him by writing his name and address in the East on a piece of paper, which the man put in his pocket.

"You'll hear from me!" he cried excitedly; "see if you don't! Why, boy, I'd be the richest man in the State if they would let me go free! But there's one man keeps me locked up until he learns where my fortune is, and the others think I'm crazy. Stand back! I am armed now! I'll kill you if you come near me! I will never be taken alive!"

So sudden had the stranger changed his tone and manner that Frank adjudged his allusion to the fortune a vagary of his diseased mind and his strange actions a fit of insanity coming on, and he sprang, startled, to one side.

The stranger had cause for his external exhibition of ferocity, however, for just then two men, the same Frank had seen across the river, came dashing through the underbrush.



"We've found him at last!" cried the pale, anxious-faced one excitedly. "Come, now, Dougall, be sensible and come back to the asylum with us."

"Never!" cried the stranger, wildly brandishing in the air the keen-bladed knife Frank Marvin had just sharpened.

Frank Marvin expected to witness a sanguinary encounter between the alleged madman and his pursuers, but the conflict was a bloodless one and of short duration.

The man they had called Dougall, the stranger for whom Frank had sharpened the knife, was disarmed in a twinkling.

His feeble strength was no match for the skill and quickness of his adversaries, who soon secured him and tied a rope around his arms and flung the knife into the river.

The smaller one of his captors seemed relieved and delighted at his capture, while his companion seemed to take the affair in a more matter-of-fact way.

"Well, Dougall," said the latter, "you've given us another wild chase, and you see how it ends."

"It will end different some day!" cried Dougall wildly, his eyes glaring at the two men.

They did not speak further to Frank, but discussed the best way to get the man back to the asylum.

"It's nearer to Brookville," said the little man. "We can get a stage there; besides——"

"You're afraid I might meet some of the people of Monmouth and tell them why you imprison me, Robert Alston!" shouted Dougall. "Good-by, Frank Marvin!" he called to the boy. "You see, I ain't so crazy that I don't know your name. I'll not forget you, and some day when I get my fortune——"

"Shut him up!" spoke Alston agitatedly to his companion. "He'll get the country talking again."

"Afraid I may betray the secret of my fortune, eh?" jeered Dougall. "Well, I won't, not even to you, who would like to know it."

Frank heard him laugh gleefully as they led him away, and a few minutes later shouldered his knapsack and started down the road.

"Brookville must be the next town," he soliloquized. "I wonder if that man Dougall is really crazy, and if there is any truth to his claims about the fortune?"

But these idle speculations departed from Frank's mind as he forgot the exciting episode he had just witnessed, little dreaming of the influence it was destined to exert on all his future life.

His step quickened, and he hurried forward, with an eye to business, as a turn in the road revealed a large farmhouse near at hand.

Frank's principal work had been at these places, rather than in the villages, and he had found many profitable tasks among the farmers.

An old, rugged man was working at a barn-yard gate as Frank came up, and seemed considerably worked up at his lack of success in adjusting the lock.

"Want any mending done about the place?" asked Frank cheerily, as he rattled the wire to indicate his avocation.

"Tinkering, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

The farmer regarded Frank with an amused smile.

"Purty young, ain't ye?"

"I understand my work."

"You do, eh? Well, mebbe ye could fix that gate?"

Frank examined the gate for a moment or two.

"Yes," he replied. "The catch is out of order and the lock needs a new spring."

"How much, now?"

"A quarter."

"Ye mean a dime."

"No, I don't. I mean just what I said—a quarter of a dollar."

"Hello, Arthur! Are ye going home?" the farmer

paused to shout to a well-dressed boy just entering the stables.

"Yes, uncle. Tom's going to drive me over to Brookville."

"All right. Tell the folks to come down next week and stay a day or two. A whole quarter of a dollar?" continued the farmer reflectively, resuming his attention to Frank. "Twenty-five cents?"

"Yes, sir; that's what it's worth."

"Waal, it's too much. I'll pay a dime."

"And a ride to Brookville in your wagon? All right," supplemented Frank quickly.

"Exactly; that makes it fair and square."

The farmer watched Frank interestedly as he worked at the gate.

He got it in complete order just in time to open it for the wagon which was to convey the farmer's nephew to Brookville.

"Hold on, Tom!" sang out the farmer to the driver.

"Got a dime?"

"Yes, dad."

"Well, give it to this boy and give him a lift to Brookville."

"All right; jump up here, youngster."

Frank lifted his knapsack into the wagon and climbed up to the seat.

He found the boy the farmer had addressed as Arthur to be about his own age and size and possessed of an engaging manner and frank, handsome face that attracted him at once.

"Seems to me you've got sick of the farm rather quick this time, Arthur?" spoke the driver, as he started up the horses.

"Oh, no; only I've got to be at Brookville to-night."

"What for?"

"The club has a meeting. They're going to elect officers and have a night's camping-out."

Frank listened intently as the boy proceeded to describe the club and its intentions for the near future.

He did not then know how completely its operations were to engross his time and attention for some weeks to come.

It seemed that the club was an organization composed mainly of the schoolboys of Brookville, and had been in existence for only a few weeks.

The vacation coming on, a series of expeditions and tramps through the country near the village was proposed, and that night was to be their first experience in rough life, with only their tents for a shelter.

"You see, we are a kind of military club in one way," remarked Arthur. "Anyway, we have uniform caps and guns and a cannon, and we go through regular drilling tactics," and Frank, listening attentively, decided that if all the members of the club were like Arthur Landon they were a very intelligent and sociable set of boys.

"I think I should like Brookville," he remarked, after Arthur had concluded an enthusiastic description of the rocky and beautiful scenery surrounding the village.

"Are you going there to stay?" inquired Arthur, with a glance of curiosity at Frank's knapsack.

"Only a few hours, I think."

"Going East?"

"Yes."

"Have you come far?"

"About two hundred miles."

"By rail, I suppose?"

"No," was Frank's startling reply; "on foot."

Both Arthur and Tom regarded Frank with newly awakened interest at hearing his strange declaration.

"Traveled two hundred miles on foot!" exclaimed Tom. "That's quite a tramp."

"I should say so!" supplemented Arthur.

"What's your idea?" inquired the farmer's son.



"To save money and see the country," was Frank's ready response.

"Where do you come from?" asked Tom.

Frank named a town far to the west.

"And where are you going?"

"I am returning to my native place."

"What did you go West for?" asked Arthur.

"To fight Indians."

Tom looked sharply at Frank, as though he thought he was trying to joke with them.

Frank's face, however, was entirely serious.

"Honest?" asked Arthur earnestly.

"Yes, honest. I lived in the East, and when my mother died I had a chance to work in a store at home, but it didn't suit me. My father had come West years before, and we never heard from him again. That set me thinking about it; and, besides, I'd read a lot of trashy books about rangers, and trappers, and cowboys, and I imagined it would be great fun to come West and hunt bears and shoot Indians."

"Did you find any?"

"Lots of Indians, but no bears. When I got beyond the mountains my visionary ideas of frontier life were rudely dispelled."

"How was that?" asked Arthur.

"I found that people were too busy building up towns and mining to go hunting bears, and that when they did see one they made it a rule to get out of his way. As to the Indians, they were either an idle, begging lot of vagrants, or were minding their own business, farming on their reservations."

"Did you do any hunting or trapping?" asked Arthur eagerly.

"Yes; I went off on an expedition with some hunters, and was a week with them. There was no poetry in it, I tell you. I came back to the city tired of the life and cured of my folly of fighting Indians. There I found work in a store as errand-boy, and stayed for nearly a year. I began to comprehend that there was something more serious in life than mere fun. Finally the store moved to another town, and I was thrown out of work."

"What did you do then?" asked Tom.

"I had about a hundred dollars saved up, and I hoarded it carefully. You see, I had gained some experience and I was becoming sensible. I was idle a week, and, as living was expensive, I determined to do something. I happened to meet a man who was a tinker, a sort of 'jack of all trades,' and I went on a tour around the country with him. I was quick to learn the business, and then, having added seventy-five dollars to my earnings, I returned to the city. I made up my mind that I would return to the East. You see, I had learned one thing in my travels, and that was that I was sadly defective in my education. I found this a great disadvantage to me, for I was proficient in nothing. I reckoned that with my money I could attend school, and by working around could add enough to it to complete my education, so I went down to the depot to buy my ticket."

Frank's narrative was like a romance to his auditors, and they sat with their eyes fixed steadfastly on his face.

"That was less than a month ago," resumed Frank. "I found the fare would take a great portion of my money, and then I thought of something else that changed my plans."

"What was that?" asked Arthur.

"My idea of returning to the East, as I have told you, was to attend a most excellent school in my native place. It was June. I knew that school would close until September, and I resolved on a rather bold move."

"Tramping it on foot?" inquired Tom.

"Exactly. I made up my mind that I would make a little money on the way. I purchased what things you see here, and have not only had a pleasant time coming this way, but have added quite an amount to my savings."

Arthur Landon's face was aglow with excitement and admiration of the career of Frank, whose varied adventures made him quite a hero in his youthful eyes.

He kept questioning Frank until they ascended a wooded hill, gradually obtaining a view of the beautiful town and its surroundings.

"You see where the river widens and that big island with a bluff on it?" asked Arthur.

Frank nodded assentingly.

"Well, we're going to camp just opposite that on the shore. Will you come over and see us, if you don't leave town to-night?"

"Yes; I will," replied Frank heartily; "and I'm glad to have met you. I've had lots of lifts on the road, but none so entertaining as this ride with you."

Frank thanked Tom for the ride, and, springing from the wagon, secured his knapsack and walked toward the principal street of the town.

Brookville had one hotel, or, rather, tavern, for it was an old-fashioned hostelry, and its guests were not numerous at any time.

The jolly, rubicund landlord stood at the door as Frank came up, and the latter told him his business and asked him if he could do any repairs for him.

"Yes, if you can do it well. There's some bell-wires broken and half a dozen window-catches and door-knobs to fix. I guess we can strike a bargain."

He showed Frank the work he wished done and made him an offer of a dollar, his supper, lodging, and breakfast for its execution.

Frank found it quite a task, and devoted nearly three hours to the work. At last completing it, he went down to the office to report progress.

"Is there anything else?" he asked.

"Not done already?" ejaculated the landlord, in some surprise.

"Yes, sir."

"See here, boy."

The landlord, with a look at the veranda, beckoned Frank into the hall.

Frank involuntarily followed his glance. To his amazement, his eyes rested on the same two men he had met that morning and who had captured the lunatic Dougall.

"Can you keep a secret, boy?" asked the landlord, in a low, confidential tone.

"I'll try, sir."

"Well, those men out there have a prisoner handcuffed and locked in a room up-stairs. They want to keep it quiet, for some reason. The man broke the lock when they first put him in there, and, as long as you are here, you had better fix it."

"All right," said Frank, somewhat excited at the reappearance of the men. "What are they waiting for?"

"The stage to take them to Monmouth."

The landlord led the way up the stairs and paused at a room on the second floor, the door of which was secured by a padlock.

He unlocked this and showed Frank where the door had been broken open.

Just then some customer from below called him.

"You fix it, boy, and keep your eye on the prisoner."

"I will, sir."

Frank glanced about the apartment with some curiosity. Upon a bed lay a man Frank recognized at a glance as the man Dougall.

His hands were secured by handcuffs, and a chain manacle surrounded his ankle and was attached to the bed-post.

His deep-set eyes glared fiercely at Frank. Then he spoke in a quick, excited tone of voice:

"Boy, come here!"

Frank left his keys and tools at the door and approached the prostrate man.



"You're the boy I met at the river, ain't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"You sharpened the knife for me. You're Frank Marvin?"

The boy nodded assentingly.

"See here," continued the man, with a hurried glance at the door, "I've something to say to you. Put your hand in my pocket inside my coat."

Frank hesitated slightly.

"Why do you wish me to do that?" he asked.

"There's a paper there I want you to take."

"What is it?"

"The key to a fortune," was Dougall's impressive reply.

## CHAPTER II.

### A STRANGE STORY.

Frank Marvin stared with mingled curiosity and uncertainty at the man who had just made such a singular statement.

His look seemed to irritate Dougall, for the latter said quickly:

"I see you don't believe me."

"Oh, sir, I can't say that, but——"

"But you're like the rest of them—you think I'm crazy."

Frank was silent.

"Well," continued Dougall, "I am, but not just now. I'm as sane as you are at the present moment, and I don't believe I'd ever get these queer spells if they wouldn't shut me up."

"What did they shut you up for?" asked Frank.

"Oh, it's a long story. Take the paper first, and I'll tell you."

Frank placed his hand in the coat pocket, as directed and found a small folded paper.

"Is this it?" he asked.

"Yes."

"What shall I do with it?"

"Secrete it and then listen to me."

Frank placed the paper in his pocket.

"Now, then, boy," said Dougall, "I told you that paper was the key to a fortune?"

"Yes, sir."

"So it is. If I thought you would go and tell what I am going to reveal to you I'd be very much disappointed in you. Again, if I thought you would think I am telling you some crazy story I'd rather not say anything more."

Dougall's manner was so earnest that Frank was deeply impressed.

"I believe you are telling me the truth, Mr. Dougall."

"Very well. I liked you from the first, and I believe you to be an honest, enterprising boy. I am going to give you some work to do, and you will be richly paid for it. Did you ever hear of Rocky River?"

"That's the river that flows past here, ain't it?" asked Frank.

"Yes. Well, when you leave me ask anybody in the village what they know about the lost treasure of Rocky River."

"I never heard of it."

"That's because you're a stranger here. Well, Frank, the story goes that twenty years ago, when this was a wilderness and Indians and outlaws abounded, a little party of gold-hunters came down the river in a flatboat."

"Was it near Brookville?"

"No; some distance north, among the hills. They were obliged to fly from pursuing enemies, and it was night. At a place where the branches of the river cut around the rocks in a secluded glen the boat was attacked. The treasure was in a little hold, and when the men found they were in danger of being captured they sunk the boat."

"Then a desperate struggle ensued. Of the eight men

in the party, all but one was killed. The survivor escaped, with terrible wounds. The secret of the lost treasure was held by that single man."

"Did you know him?" asked the interested Frank.

"Yes; that man was myself."

Frank looked wonderingly at Dougall, who continued:

"Yes, boy; I am telling you the truth. All that treasure, the results of months of hard labor, was sunk in the river, its owners killed except one, and that one, myself, was picked up at Monmouth, where I had some relatives, stark, raving mad."

"Monmouth was then a mere outpost, and my cousin, Robert Alston, lived there. For a time he took care of me, but the wounds I had received had affected my mind, and I was out of my head and violent most of the time."

"The story of the lost treasure-boat got noised around, and some people tried to locate it, but were unsuccessful, and it began to be considered a mere myth. As for myself, I lived in mental darkness until two years since."

"Then I began to have lucid intervals. Monmouth had grown to be quite a county seat, and I had been brought there and placed in an asylum by my cousin. He did not pay for my keeping, however. It seems that some land I had owned in the place had greatly increased in value, and Alston secured the right to handle it for my benefit. I soon discovered that he was entirely selfish in his plans, and was making money as my conservator. I accused him of this in a lucid moment, but he wouldn't talk to me."

"This is the second time I tried to escape, and again I have failed. They are bound to keep me a prisoner for life, and my cousin has tried to learn the secret of the lost treasure. That paper you have tells all about it. I want you to promise to go and search for it."

Frank Marvin was silent. This was the strangest adventure he had ever met with. He hardly knew what to believe of the singular story.

"Will you do it?" asked Dougall impatiently.

"I did not intend to stay in Brookville but a week or two, at the most."

"What is that time to you if you get hundreds of dollars for your trouble?"

Frank reflected deeply.

"Mr. Dougall," he said finally, "I hardly know what to say. Why don't you put the matter in the hands of some older person?"

"Because I can't trust them. They are all thieves and scoundrels!" cried Dougall wildly. "I can trust you. I believe you are honest. Don't disappoint a helpless, imprisoned man. My spells of insanity are becoming less frequent, and if I thought you was trying to find the treasure the hope would make me improve rapidly."

"I'll tell you what I will do," said Frank.

"What is that?"

"Think it over; and if I decide not to go in search of the treasure to come to the asylum where they take you and return this paper."

"All right," replied Dougall eagerly. "Oh, I know you will go! And when you get the treasure the money can be used to secure a lawyer and get me free. Some one is coming. Frank, don't disappoint me. I rely on you entirely to help me regain my reason and my liberty."

Frank hurried to the door and took up his tools, and was busy with the lock as the landlord came up the stairs.

His mind was full of the episode of the hour. It all seemed like a dream to him as he kept thinking of it.

The landlord remained with him until he had completed his work, and then relocked the door of the room.

It was an hour later when the stage came up. Frank stood watching it as the two men he had met that morning came out of the tavern, leading Dougall between them.

He met the eyes of Dougall as he stepped into the stage. He imagined his glance conveyed a last earnest appeal to remember what he had told him and to act upon it.



Then, as the stage disappeared in the distance, Frank walked in the direction of the camp of the Brookville Boys' Club Arthur Landon had told him about.

Just at the outskirts of the village of Brookville a high, level green overlooked the river, and this was the place to which Arthur Landon had referred.

The long vacation had come, and the club of which he had spoken had for many months anticipated its pleasures with eager hopes.

The organization proper included about a score of boys, all about Arthur's age, and Arthur Landon and Barton Grey were the acknowledged leaders of the same.

These two boys were as different in dispositions as could be. Arthur was a whole-souled, ingenuous boy, liked and admired by everybody.

Barton was a most amiable acquaintance as long as affairs went to suit him, but was intensely disagreeable when he was crossed or disappointed in any cherished purpose.

The club had recently organized, and Barton had been made its first captain. His imperious ways had more than once given offense to various members, and the election of a new leader that evening bid fair to result in his defeat.

It was intended to make quite a long excursion by boat up the river within a few days, and the boys anticipated a great deal of enjoyment out of the trip.

As in all villages, there were two divisions of the juvenile population in Brookville, and one of these comprised a very disorderly and vicious element.

Two miles from Brookville, and down the river toward Monmouth, there was a settlement the denizens of which were engaged in mining.

It was an ignorant community, made up for the most part of shiftless, ambitionless people, who lived from hand to mouth and brought up their children very carelessly.

Among its younger representatives were several very rough and quarrelsome boys, whose especial delight seemed to be to annoy and abuse the schoolboys at Brookville.

There was a long, narrow island in the river, which ended in a wooded, precipitous bluff, and, as this was a favorite fishing and hunting spot, the two juvenile factions would very often meet there.

Upon the night which opens our story affairs were in a very critical condition, so far as the rival groups of boys were concerned.

It seems that the Shantytown boys, as the residents of the mining settlement were known, had got an inkling of the intentions of the club, and had that day come up to the island, about twenty strong.

They had taken possession of the bluff end of the island, overlooking the camp of the club, and had set up a sail-cloth tent and tied a red band around their hats, to give their appearance a uniform aspect similar to that of the Brookville boys.

"They mean trouble," said Arthur Landon, as they met on the green that evening. "Look over at the bluff, boys."

All eyes were directed toward the island. On its summit could be seen the camp of the mining boys, and a red flag on a stick seemed to wave defiance to their old-time adversaries.

It was just getting dusk, and the club had got their tents up and had built a large camp-fire.

They intended to elect officers later on, set guards, and devote a night to genuine camp life.

It was not until one of the boys, who had gone in search of fire-wood, returned from the river that the arrangements of the club for the evening were rudely disturbed.

"See here, boys," he cried, "there's trouble over the river!"

"What do you mean?" asked Arthur.

"The boats."

"No one's been meddling with them?"

"Yes; they have."

"Andy Brown's crowd, the Shantytown boys?"

"Yes."

Instantly the camp was in a state of great confusion.

They forgot all the system of their military arrangements and adjourned to the river below.

"The boats are gone, that's sure," remarked Arthur, "but how do you know the Brown boys took them?"

"I saw them rowing to the island," replied the boy who had been the first to inform them of the event.

Just then there was a derisive yell from the bluff, and the light of a camp-fire showed a dozen ragged forms dancing hilariously in its glow.

The fire illumined the water, but showed no trace of the missing boats.

"They've carried them around to the other side of the island," said Barton Grey.

"Then we've got to get them!" remarked Arthur.

"We have no boat."

"Let some of the boys get one."

Some of the party went down the river, and returned shortly afterward rowing a boat.

Into this a dozen or more of the boys climbed and began rowing for the island.

"The Brown boys are going to bother us all they can," said Barton. "It will come to an open fight yet."

"Yes," remarked another boy; "they pitched into two of the schoolboys yesterday and whipped them badly."

The boat had got fairly within the shadow of the bluff, when a series of the most frightful yells broke from its summit.

Immediately, too, a shower of missiles was hurled at the advancing boat.

"Run the boat back!" cried Barton excitedly; "or we'll be swamped!"

Clods of earth and rocks began to fall thick and fast about them, and they realized that if they tried to get around to the side of the island their enemies on the bluff would continue this species of attack.

They were forced to retreat. A score of indignant ejaculations escaped the throng.

"They're regular thieves!"

"They ought to be driven from the island!"

"They'll spoil all our sport for to-night."

"Let us load up the cannon and fire at them!" suggested one of the boys, more desperate than the others.

At that moment a sound echoed over the waters that caused them all to start and listen intently.

Boom!

Boom!

Every boy in the boat looked at his companion in wonderment and dismay as the sound echoed on the silent river.

"Did you hear that?" asked Barton Grey impressively.

"Yes," replied Arthur.

"Do you know what it is?"

"Our cannon."

"Yes."

They sprang ashore as the boat touched the landing and stood ruefully contemplating the bluff and its denizens.

"They've beaten us back and outwitted us!" said Barry.

"They had ought to be arrested!"

"Pshaw! It's only a boyish quarrel. If we tell our folks and make a row about it they'll think we ain't able to take care of ourselves."

A grim silence settled down over the throng as they again reached their camp.

"See here, boys," said Arthur. "We won't let this affair bother us to-night."

The cannon was a small affair, and had been purchased for show and to fire an occasional salute.

The boys must have stolen into the camp while they were away at the river and secured it.



"They've got our boats and cannon," said Barton glumly.

"Well, we'll get them back in the morning."

"No; we won't."

"Why not?"

"They'll take them down to Shantytown, and we won't get them back again."

The guards were set, and the camp soon resembled a regular soldiers' encampment.

The episode of their rivals on the bluff shadowed the evening's enjoyment, however.

It was over half an hour later, when a sentinel came into the camp marching before a stranger.

"Here's a visitor, captain," he said to Barton Grey.

"Who is he?" asked the latter.

"I know him!" cried Arthur. "I'm glad you came. Boys, this is Frank Marvin, a friend of mine."

Arthur's introduction of Frank seemed to make the latter a welcome visitor.

He was soon seated by the camp-fire, and became at once interested as the boys told of the theft of the cannon and boats.

Arthur explained the situation to him fully, and pointed out the bluff and its denizens.

"I think I know a way to get back your boats," he remarked.

His companions were all eager attention at once.

"How?" inquired Barton.

"Just wait until a little later, when they ain't on the watch, and row your boat cautiously along the opposite shore yonder. The boats must be on the other side of the island."

"I suppose so."

"That's easily done. Now, as to the cannon, couldn't we reach the island, gain the bluff, and make a bold assault on the enemy?"

Barton shook his head negatively.

"They are too many for us," he said. "They would see us coming and beat us back."

Frank regarded the bluff critically.

"We'll get the boats first, anyway," he said; "then we'll see about the cannon."

It was about an hour later when he and Arthur, Barton, and several others started out in the boat to execute his project.

The night was dark, there being no moon, and they managed to reach the island without being assailed or discovered.

The boats were found beached at the foot of the bluff, and they silently drew them into the water.

"Wait for a minute," said Frank, as they were about to return to the island.

"What are you going to do?" asked Arthur.

"Reconnoiter a little."

Frank advanced up the bluff a little distance, and was gone for some time.

"Did you learn anything?" Barton asked him upon his return.

"Yes. There's a good many boys there."

"And rough ones, too."

"They look like it."

"Are they asleep?"

"No; they are telling stories, and smoking, and playing cards. They're a pretty hard set of boys, I guess."

Barton Grey winced a little as a companion nudged him at Frank's words, for the former was mildly addicted to all the vices to which Frank had referred.

"Did you see the cannon?" asked Arthur.

"Yes," replied Frank. "It's on the edge of the bluff, beyond the camp."

"We couldn't reach it without their seeing us?"

"No; I think not."

"Then it's as good as gone."

"No; it ain't," replied Frank confidently.

"Why not?"

"I'm going to get it."

"You?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"I'll tell you later. If you'll trust the affair to me I guess we'll fire them a salute in the morning."

The boats were rowed to the mainland.

"Now, then," said Barton eagerly, "what about the cannon?"

"Can you get me a long rope?"

"Yes; I guess so."

"Do it, then, and leave the rest to me."

"All right," and Barton and a couple of companions started for the village.

They returned shortly afterward with a coil of rope.

"Will that do?" asked Barton.

"Splendidly. Now, will half a dozen of you come with me in one of the boats?"

A party of picked men was soon made up.

"Row softly for the bluff," ordered Frank.

His command was promptly obeyed.

Frank stepped ashore and glanced upward.

The bluff was very steep, and apparently inaccessible at this point.

"I don't see what we accomplish by coming here?" remarked Barton.

"Frank knows what he's about," said Arthur.

Frank walked around the base of the bluff for a little distance.

Then he returned to the boat.

"Give me the rope," he said to Arthur.

"What are you going to do?" asked Barton curiously.

Frank's reply startled him not a little.

"I'm going to climb the cliff," he said simply.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE ENEMY'S CAMP.

"You can't do it!" cried Barton Grey excitedly.

"Don't talk so loud," said Frank warningly. "We don't want the boys up there to hear us. I think I can do it; anyway, I intend to try. We can't get to the cannon any other way without passing them."

"What shall we do?" asked Arthur.

"Remain here. When I get to the top—"

"If you do," interrupted Barton, somewhat sneeringly.

"Yes, if I do, I will get the cannon, tie it to this rope, and drop it over the bluff to you. Now, then, don't make any noise, and I think we will succeed."

The boys watched Frank Marvin with intense curiosity as he seized a bush and began to lift himself from the ground.

It was, in their eyes, a daring and impossible feat—one they had often tried and as often failed.

Frank Marvin's experience in the far West had made him an expert in climbing, however, and he had confidence in his steady nerve and strength.

Slowly he began to ascend the bluff, aided by the bushes and vines that covered its surface.

Long after the darkness shut out all view of his progress from the anxious watchers below he was toilsomely nearing the top of the bluff.

He reached it breathless and exhausted, his fingers scratched and bleeding from thorns and brambles, and his clothing badly damaged from contact with the jagged rocks over which he had been compelled to climb.

He clambered over the edge of the bluff and lay silent upon the ground fully five minutes.

He could see the camp-fire of the Shantytown boys about forty feet distant, and their forms seated around it.



No one had witnessed his arrival, as he was outside of the radius of the firelight.

The cannon, a small affair weighing perhaps twenty pounds, was between Frank and the fire, and he began finally to crawl cautiously toward it.

It was made of iron and mounted on wheels, and he drew it slowly forward along the ground as he reached it.

None of his movements so far had been observed by the boys around the camp-fire, and Frank felicitated himself with the assurance that his project would result successfully.

Frank had placed the rope he had borne on his shoulders on the ground near the edge of bluff.

As he reached it he attached one end to the axle of the cannon-wheels and tied the other around a large tree near at hand.

He now slipped the cannon over the edge and began to lower it cautiously.

The rope was almost entirely paid out before he knew that his friends below at the boat had secured it.

The cannon was untied and the rope became slack and free.

"So far, success," murmured Frank, in a satisfied tone of voice. "Hello! I haven't got free myself, it seems."

He dodged back among some bushes as he saw several forms dashing toward him.

The occasion of their appearance he understood later. One of the number had flung away a pipe they were quarreling over, and they were scrambling around to regain possession of it.

One of them rushed directly through the bushes where Frank was, fell over the latter, discovered him, and shouted the intelligence to his comrades.

"Hello, boys! He's a stranger—a spy! Quick! He's going to run away!"

Frank had, indeed, arisen to his feet, determined on a dash down the hill to the river, but his plans were almost immediately frustrated.

He was surrounded by half a dozen roughly dressed boys, one of whom, evidently the leader, seized him by the arm.

"Hello!" he ejaculated. "Who are you?" and the boy, who was the same Andy Brown Frank had heard the club boys refer to, dragged him toward the camp-fire.

Frank was a little dismayed, but not a particle frightened.

"My name is Frank Marvin," he said.

"Where do you come from?"

Frank pointed toward the village.

"I never saw you there," said Andy suspiciously.

"I'm a stranger here."

"Didn't you come from the Brookville boys' camp?"

"Yes; I stopped there on the way."

"I thought so. Bring him into the camp, boys; we'll investigate this affair."

Andy Brown assumed all the dignity of a great military commander as he spoke these words.

Frank regarded his captors boldly, although he discerned that they regarded him with very combative looks.

They pushed him to a seat on a log and surrounded him silently, leaving it to their captain to question him.

"Now, then," said Andy, "we want no more prevarication. Who are you?"

"I have told you—a stranger in Brookville."

"Didn't you come from the camp yonder?"

"Yes; but I don't belong to the club."

"Didn't you come here to spy on us?"

Frank hesitated a moment or two.

"Well," he said finally, "I confess that I have been watching you."

"Oh! Then you are a spy?"

"You can call me that if you like."

"Well, we'll show you how we treat spies!"

Andy Brown sprang to his feet, and Frank did the same.

The other boys crowded around him.

With one dash he broke through their ranks and started for the edge of the bluff.

Seizing the rope, he began to descend rapidly.

Suddenly it gave way. Some one had cut the rope before he was half its length.

With a cry of alarm and dismay, Frank Marvin fell to the waters of the river, many feet below.

The mishap to Frank Marvin marked a crisis in the affairs of the night which the members of the Brookville Boys' Club were soon to realize was a portentous one.

So apparently naturally and coherently do events sometimes occur that people often find themselves involved in an actual drama in real life without comprehending it fully. Thus with the new friends of the hero of the bluff exploit, for they were soon destined to become involved in a marvelously strange and startling series of adventures which were to owe their occurrence directly to the boy who had restored to them their stolen piece of ordnance.

The boat at the foot of the bluff had been rowed under its shadow, and Barton and Arthur, after receiving the cannon lowered by the rope, waited several minutes, expecting that Frank would appear.

As, however, the moments went by and he did not return, an anxious expression came into Arthur's face.

"See here, Barton," he said concernedly, "there's something wrong."

"It looks so."

"Did you hear those shouts?"

"Yes."

"They mean——"

"That your friend has probably been taken prisoner."

Arthur looked serious.

"Then we must rescue him!" he said, after a pause.

"If we can, yes. First, though, Arthur, we had better take the cannon to the camp."

This was decided upon and done. For two hours thereafter, however, several of the boys haunted the vicinity of the bluff, intent on finding some trace of their missing companion.

His fate became more and more of a mystery as the hours passed by. A river-party reported that they had found the severed rope at the foot of the cliff, and others, who had reached the land side of the promontory, investigated sufficiently to be able to declare positively that Frank Marvin was not a prisoner among the Brown boys.

"He has escaped, and, sick of his experience, has returned to the town," remarked Barton sleepily, toward midnight. "Of course, the Brown boys wouldn't hurt him. They have given him a drubbing and let him go, or he has escaped and gone to town. I guess he thinks camping out ain't so funny, after all."

The boys contented themselves with this solution of the mystery, and the camp was soon quiet and asleep. With morning, however, Arthur was on his way to the village. He had taken a great liking to Frank, and he was unselfish enough to attribute his mishaps to devotion to their interests. He knew the Brown boys to be cruel and wicked, and, while he did not fear that they would seriously injure their prisoner, he knew they were reckless enough to send him adrift in a boat, or shut him in some cave, or lead him miles away and leave him to find his way back to town as best he might.

Arthur became alarmed as he made inquiries at the hotel. The landlord informed him that Frank had not been there since the previous evening. His little kit of tools was in the room that had been apportioned him, but their owner was absent. It began to look serious, and a score of distressing theories filled Arthur's mind.

The club had made its arrangements to leave on their expedition the next morning, and when he returned to the camp he found it a scene of bustle and excitement. There was the election to be held and a lot of things to pack up



at the academy and their homes. Anxious as Arthur was concerning Frank, he was compelled to defer a proposition to make a search for their missing friend until the boys were less engrossed in their own personal affairs.

The election resulted in his victorious appointment as captain of the club. Barton Grey took his defeat sorely, and sullenly retired from the camp, without a word of congratulation for his successor. His perversity was unnoticed by the others, however, who scattered to prepare for the morrow's expedition, and two hours later Arthur found him in the study-room of the academy, moodily seated on a desk and ruminating savagely over his fallen fortunes.

The ingenuous Arthur endeavored to drive away his bad temper, but succeeded poorly. Most of all, he tried to awaken an interest in Barton's mind as to the fate of Frank Marvin.

"It ain't right, Barton," he said seriously. "He got into trouble in trying to aid us—"

"Own fault—took his risks!" growled Barton curlily.

"Maybe; but we are mean to desert him."

"Humph! He's all right. Some tramp, who is one day here, another there. He's gone on his journey, safe enough, never fear."

Arthur was almost angry at Barton's indifference, but he said nothing more. He determined, however, to proceed alone to learn what had become of Frank Marvin, and late in the afternoon took a boat and went down the river.

The camp of the Brown boys on the bluff had been abandoned. He noted that as he passed the cliff. He cast longing and anxious looks at the settlement where they lived, but he knew that it was folly for an academy boy to venture into its precincts. Continuing his journey, he scanned the banks of the stream closely, hoping to find some trace of Frank, and theorizing that, being a stranger to the vicinity, he might readily have become lost.

Just as he reached a bend in the river he backed the oars in some dismay. A boat full of boys was coming directly toward him. They set up a defiant shout as they saw him. They were of the Brown crowd, and Arthur at once realized that they would not let an enemy escape unscathed.

Instead of flying, however, he directed his boat toward them. This bold movement amazed them, and something in his serious manner and impressive face silenced them to interest and curiosity as he reached them.

"Fighting is fighting, boys, and you fellows owe us a grudge," began Arthur. "But I'm sure where the life or death of a person is concerned you'll drop hard feeling for the time being."

The boys stared hard at Arthur, and the latter noticed, with some satisfaction and relief, that Andy Brown, their leader, was not among their number.

"What are you driving at?" growled one of them gruffly.

"This: A friend of ours visited your camp on the bluff last night."

"A spy, you mean."

"No; a friend," persisted Arthur calmly, "who went to return what you had stolen—our cannon."

"Well, he did it, didn't he?"

"Yes; but he did not return himself."

"We can't help it."

"Maybe not; only he's missing, and, as he was last seen with you, if he ain't found you may get into trouble, that's all," responded Arthur significantly.

"Why, you don't suppose we'd do him any real harm, do you?"

"No; but you know what became of him."

"He escaped from us."

"How?"

"By the rope. He made for the river."

"Maybe he was drowned," spoke another of the crowd.

Arthur Landon turned pale. This solution of Frank

Marvin's strange disappearance had not suggested itself to his mind before.

"Then you are responsible for it!" he cried excitedly; "for some of you cut the rope. You need not deny it, for we found the rope."

A deep hush came over the boys, and more than one face wore a frightened expression.

Arthur Landon was too deeply moved to talk with them further. His mind formed a quick theory as to what had occurred. Frank had escaped to the rope, some of the boys had cut it, he had fallen into the river, and—

He shuddered at the thought of a tragedy at the threshold of their boyish adventures, and rowed forward, with a gloomy face; and, driving the boat ashore, sat lost in somber reflection.

It was probably half an hour later when he was aroused suddenly from his reverie. A voice had spoken his name. Looking up, he saw a boy approaching him, whom he recognized as one of the crowd in the boat he had hailed a few moments previous.

The lad looked worried, and he glanced apprehensively around as he neared Arthur.

"See here," he blurted out, "I don't want any trouble about your friend, if the others do. They did cut the rope."

"Who did?"

"Andy Brown."

"And what happened then?"

"A splash. We didn't see any more. Andy got frightened, though, and left the camp this morning. He thought the boy was drowned, but he was not."

Arthur uttered a glad cry.

"Then you know where he is?" he asked eagerly.

"No; but Andy does."

"You are sure?"

"Certain."

"Why?"

"Well, I'll tell you; but I only do it so you won't have us arrested about the affair, and it's a secret."

"Yes."

"This afternoon two men came down the river to the island. Andy and the rest of us were there. I knew the men—that is, I've seen them before. One of them was Mr. Alston, from Monmouth. The other was the keeper of the insane asylum. They had been at Brookville making inquiries, and they had come down the river searching for some one—who do you think?"

"Who?"

"The very boy you are after—Martin, or Marlin, or something like that, they called him."

Arthur Landon looked startled and amazed. Frank had affirmed that he knew no one in the vicinity, and yet here were two men anxiously seeking him. What could it mean?

"Are you sure of this?" he asked the boy.

"Yes. Andy looked frightened, for he was afeared they knew of the cut rope, so he told them the boy had gone down the river. The men then said that they would give him ten dollars if he found him. You see that old shanty over in the copse?"

"Yes," replied Arthur wonderingly.

"Well, they were to meet him at four o'clock. It's near that time now, ain't it?"

"Nearly four—yes."

"Then they'll be there. Andy will be there, too, for he and his brother Mark, by some fool luck, actually found the boy. They're tickled to death over getting the ten dollars. The boy is alive and is down the river somewhere. That's the honest truth."

Arthur Landon uttered a prodigious sigh of relief, but he was still highly curious over the mystery of the men's interest in Frank Marvin and anxious to learn his whereabouts.



"Did they say where they'd found him?" he asked.

"No; they didn't. Say, don't you ever let them know I told you. There goes Andy and Mark now. Don't you betray me, or—"

The boy clenched his fists menacingly, to indicate how terrible would be his revenge, and disappeared to evade the Browns.

Arthur Landon looked startled as he found himself alone.

"A curious story," he murmured; "and it mystifies me. Yonder go the Brown boys to meet the men. There's a sheltering copse clear up to the old shanty. I'll go there and try to learn what all this mystery means."

And, leaving the boat, he crept cautiously toward the old, ruined cabin which he saw Andy and Mark Brown enter at that moment.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### A STRANGE INTERVIEW.

The cabin was a dismantled structure, and as Arthur Landon glided into the open, doorless shed at its rear he could distinctly hear the sound of voices in the main apartment beyond.

A broken window looked out into the shed. Beneath this the boards were loose, and through the interstices unseen he could view the proceedings in the front room.

It held four persons. On a broken stool sat the same man whom Frank Marvin had met the day previous—Robert Alston. His brow was anxious and scowling, and on a bench near him was his companion, who had assisted in the capture of Dougall. Of course, of this incident in Frank's career Arthur was ignorant, but he was soon to be enlightened, at least partly, concerning its details.

Andy Brown, a cunning, avaricious look in his face, had just entered the place, and his brother Mark pressed timidly behind him.

"Well?" demanded Alston eagerly.

"We've found him," announced Andy triumphantly. "Lucky for us."

"Why so?"

"Because I didn't tell you all to-day, and I had no idea of finding him when I left you. You see, we let him drop into the river last night, and we were afraid he had drowned."

"Which he hadn't," grinned Mark, *sotto voce*, "lucky for us—and the ten dollars!"

"Yes; give it here. We've found him," said Andy.

"I don't know that yet," remarked Alston.

"Oh! You don't intend to pay us?"

"Yes, I do; but I must first know where he is."

"Down the river."

"Where?"

"Almost ten miles. He must have floated there. Anyway, this morning an old half-breed, living on the stream, found him lying on the bank. He was insensible and nearly drowned. The man took him to his cabin."

"And he's there now?" asked Alston eagerly.

"Yes."

"Good! Do you hear, Rawson? We have found him!"

The watching Arthur Landon was amazed at the excitement and delight that Alston betrayed at his discovery.

"Do I get my pay now?" asked Andy.

"Yes. Here is your money."

Andy Brown's eyes danced with delight as Alston handed him a ten-dollar bill.

The two boys were about to hurry from the hut, when the man whom Alston had called Rawson said:

"Hold on, boys!"

"What is it?" asked Alston.

"We don't know how to find the boy."

"That's so."

"And we can't walk ten miles, and can't risk his being gone by delay. See here, boys, have you a boat?"

"Yes," replied Andy.

"I'll give you five dollars more to row us to the place where the boy is," said Alston.

Andy hesitated. Evidently he was anxious to get away and spend the ten dollars. However, he said:

"I'll do it. You come down to the river in half an hour."

"Don't disappoint us."

"I won't, don't fear. We want the money too bad; eh, Mark?" chuckled Andy, and then both left the hut.

Alston had arisen to his feet and was pacing the floor restlessly.

"Of course, it's the same boy," he said finally.

"It must be."

"It's strange how he came to be mixed up in the affair, and it's lucky we learned that Dougall had given him the paper to the lost treasure. Now, then, all we have got to do is to find Marvin, and get that paper away from him."

"It's a fortune if we do," remarked Rawson.

"Certain; and we will be well rewarded for all our trouble. Come, let us get to the river. If we find Marvin still insensible we can get the paper and he never know who took it."

The two men left the cabin. Arthur Landon watched them as they disappeared from view. There was a vague, harassing mystery in his mind. It seemed as if the movements of these men portended trouble for Frank Marvin. Had he known exactly where Frank was, were it not that his duty to the club demanded his return to Brookville, he would have tried to locate and warn or rescue him.

But this idea was impracticable. The paper so mysteriously referred to might belong to Alston himself. At least, Frank would not be injured. He would probably return to Brookville that night, or as they went down the river in the morning Arthur could meet or find him and explain what he had overheard.

An hour later he again neared the village. A booming gun told him that the club were to meet for final instructions for the morrow, and just then a large paper balloon rose gracefully in the air from the camp and sailed rapidly northward.

It was a parting messenger from the camp, sent up by the boys. Composed of old newspapers and filled with alcoholic gas, it sailed the air swiftly.

Little did Arthur Landon dream that the careless act was destined to cut a prominent figure in his future movements—that the light air-ship was to prove a messenger to a man miles and miles away, a sentinel from civilization, the first in years—that it was to be a vital, important element in the fate of himself and his missing friend, Frank Marvin.

The adventures of Frank Marvin, after his bold attempt to escape from the Brown boys on the bluff, were of a character most startling and unusual even to his hardy nature.

He had not feared his ability to reach the water in safety, and he slid the rope with ease and assurance until its strands parted.

Then, realizing that his enemies had severed it, he thrilled to quick dismay as he glanced downward and saw that the river was quite a distance below.

Splash!

Contact with the waters blinded and choked him momentarily, but he struck out resolutely, determined to reach the shore, when circumstances changed this intention.

A glance showed that his companions had abandoned their post of duty and had left him to his fate. Doubtlessly, he reasoned, the Brown boys would watch his career. The bluff shore could be easily reached, but there his foes could discern him, descend, and recapture him.

As he essayed to strike out for the mainland he found the current very strong. His fall had dislodged a heavy log, and as this floated by him he seized it.



"I'm wet, anyway," murmured Frank; "and I'll float past the bluff and out of the reach of those desperate young villains and then land."

Thus he proceeded for some distance in the darkness, and was about to abandon his buoy and swim ashore, when he came to a halt with a shock.

A terrible blow on the head benumbed and confused him. He saw quickly what had happened. The current had driven him against a large floating piece of timber, his head had struck it, and he was in immediate peril of losing sensibility.

Frank had just strength enough to clamber upon the floating obstruction when he sank back, unconscious.

What occurred for the ensuing two hours he never knew. When he again opened his eyes he was wet and chilled and shivering. A thousand burning pains ran through his frame, and when he attempted to rise he fell back exhausted.

He was still lying on the piece of timber, and this was being borne down the strong central current of the river as rapidly as ever. He could only lie still and watch the flying landscape, and, realizing that he was badly injured, vaguely speculate as to his probable fate.

Then the old dizzy, swimming sensation again overcame his senses, and he relapsed into unconsciousness once more.

Later he seemed to have a momentary return of light and reason. The timber appeared to have floated ashore, for he seemed to be lying on a beach, and a dark, fierce-looking man, a half-breed, was bending over him.

Then darkness again, and hours later another gleam of consciousness, in which he found himself on a rough couch in a rude cabin.

Later still—it was night now, he could tell that, for a lamp was burning in the outer room of the cabin—the sound of human voices struck jarringly on his hearing.

With a powerful effort he roused himself. Could it be possible—was he still dreaming? In the outer room, plainly revealed by the lamplight, he saw the sinister faces of the captors of the poor lunatic, Dougall, and they were speaking his name.

What did it mean? Where was he? What the significance of the presence of the two men he had decided the day previous to be plotters and evil-minded enemies of a persecuted man? Every sense aroused, he listened. In a wild, suspenseful excitement, he overheard a conversation that thrilled him to marvelous interest and alarm.

"Well, Alston, the Brown boys told the truth—the boy is here."

"Yes. We've got rid of the half-breed by sending for horses. Now, then, Rawson, it's the paper, and then to return to Monmouth. It certainly contains the secret of the lost treasure."

"How did you come to intercept the letter that Dougall wrote?"

"Why, I saw him scribbling covertly after we left the tavern at Brookville. I pretended not to notice him. I saw him fold the note and drop it out of the wagon as we neared the asylum. I slipped out of the wagon myself and recovered it."

"And it read?"

"On the outside, 'Any one finding this note take it at once to Frank Marvin, at the tavern at Brookville.' After we got Dougall safe and sound at the asylum I read its contents."

"What did it say?"

Alston read from a small paper as follows:

"DEAR FRANK: When I gave you the paper about the sunken gold I forgot to tell you that it is in the north fork of the cañon you must search."

"And that was all?" queried Rawson.

"Yes. I at once suspected all. He met this boy at the hotel and took him into his confidence. He gave him the

paper that explains where all the gold is that we have sought for so unsuccessfully for so many years. Then we started to find him."

"And have succeeded!"

"At last. Come!"

Alston had taken up the lamp, with the evident intention of visiting the next room.

Frank Marvin was terribly excited. In a flash his quick mind comprehended all. If these men deemed any action of Dougall's of sufficient importance to hunt him down, the story of the alleged lunatic must be true.

The lost treasure must have a veritable foundation in fact, and these men knew it and sought to unscrupulously profit by it.

A sacred trust, then, had been awarded him. A persecuted, helpless man's fortune was in his keeping. Should plotting villains wrest it from him? Never! Every sense of fidelity and honor was aroused as Frank Marvin discerned that he was the center of a deep, dark plot.

He had placed the paper that Dougall had given him at the hotel in a small match-box for safe-keeping. As he realized that Alston and Rawson were coming to wrest it from him he comprehended that he must act rapidly and shrewdly, or all was lost. In a moment he decided on a certain course of action. Drawing the match-box from his pocket, he took out the paper.

Frank thought of concealing it about the couch, in his mouth, in his cap; but abandoned all these plans, and then, as a bright thought struck him, remembered that the day previous the sole of one of his shoes had become loosened.

Quickly he reached up his foot, pried the elastic leather back, and inserted the folded paper. Then he fell back, closed his eyes, and feigned the slumber so essential to deceive his visitors, who otherwise would suspect that he had listened to their conversation and acted upon its suggestion.

Alston entered the room, followed by Rawson, and, placing the lamp on the floor, approached the bed.

"A likely-looking boy," remarked Rawson, as they glanced down at Frank Marvin's motionless figure.

"Yes; and a shrewd-looking one, too."

"I wonder if he knew Dougall before he met him yesterday?"

"Likely not."

"Or if he has yet read the paper?"

"We can't tell."

"Let us wait till he gets better, and find out. He may have told some one."

"Well, well, we'll see later," ejaculated Alston impatiently. "The paper is the thing now."

"He's insensible yet?"

"Yes."

There was a lapse of silence as Alston began to search Frank.

He uttered a cry of dismay and disappointment as he ransacked every pocket.

"It ain't here!" he exclaimed.

"It must be!"

"Well, I've searched, and can't find it."

"Then he's hidden it somewhere. Here, you young rascal, wake up—wake up!"

Rawson shook Frank roughly as he spoke in an irritated, disappointed tone of voice.

Frank moaned slightly, opened his eyes, and then, sitting up on the couch, stared vacantly at his visitors.

"Where am I?" he murmured faintly.

"Never mind!" rejoined Alston savagely. "You're Frank Marvin, ain't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, we are officers of the law, and we have been sent to find you."

Alston hoped by a menacing falsehood to frighten Frank into alarm and carry his point.



"What have I done?" asked Frank innocently.

"You've aided a lunatic in stealing a valuable paper. Come, be quick, young man—no evasion! The man you met yesterday gave you a paper that he stole, and I'll jail you if you don't at once produce it!"

Frank Marvin struggled to his feet. He had decided on defiance now, rather than deception or equivocation, for he might dissemble where feigning unconsciousness would aid his cause, but he shrank from staining his lips with a deliberate lie.

"All right," he said calmly. "Take me to jail."

The two men stared at him in utter amazement.

Something in his bold, dauntless glance told Alston that he knew more than he spoke.

"You young villain!" he ejaculated; "you are wiser than we thought! You had that paper!"

"Yes, sir; I did."

"And, if you don't want trouble, give it up! Here, Rawson, go and get the constables!"

"Why, I thought you were officers of the law?" remarked Frank.

Alston uttered a cry of rage.

"He's too keen for us, Rawson!" he muttered angrily. "See here, boy, that paper is very important to us."

"I believe you when you say that."

"And I'll give you \$100 to produce it."

"Not for a thousand, Mr. Alston—for I know your name. I will not tell a falsehood. Mr. Dougall did give me a paper—a sacred trust I promised to execute. I will not falter for bribes or threats. I only say to you—find it!"

A cry of terrible rage escaped Alston's lips at the calm, serene defiance of a mere boy.

He clenched his fist and sprang forward, as if to fell Frank with a single blow.

Rawson interposed.

"None of that, Alston!" he said. "It will do no good. Wait till the horses come, and we'll take this stubborn young rascal with us. I think I can find a way to open his mouth."

"Here is the half-breed now, Rawson," said Alston.

The two men returned into the outer room as its door opened.

A tawny-skinned, scowling man entered the room.

"Did you get the horses?" asked Alston.

"Yes."

"Where are they?"

"Outside."

Frank Marvin, unnoticed by his captors, had arisen to his feet again.

One glance showed a window at the remote end of the room.

He glided toward it, pushed back the sash, and sprang to the frame.

"Look out! He is escaping!"

As Alston, discovering him, uttered these words, he sprang toward the inner apartment.

He was, however, too late to prevent Frank Marvin's bold flight.

Frank had reached the ground. Near-by stood the two horses the half-breed had brought.

He ran toward them, made a flying leap, and was in the saddle of one of them in a flash.

A superb horseman, he disdained pursuit, as his senses thrilled to the thought that he was acting in the direct line of duty.

Glancing back, he saw two dusky forms at the door of the cabin and one mounting the remaining steed.

Then, urging forward his own horse, he fairly flew down the rough bridle-path before him into the darkness and gloom of the starless night.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE RAPIDS.

A brighter morning never dawned than that succeeding the day upon which Arthur Landon and Frank Marvin had both met with such strange adventures. The former, the evening previous, had said nothing to his companions concerning the overheard conversation between the Brown boys and the two men in the old hut by the river, but he had resolved, when the expedition started, to make a thorough quest for the missing Frank, even if it delayed the club in its progress.

They had sent the village constable to Shantytown after the boats that had been stolen the night of the cliff assault, and these had been found in a haunt of the Brown boys. There were four boats that the club intended to take with them, and the seventy odd members of the club looked very attractive and militarylike as they were marshaled at the brink of the river, and a large number of the residents of Brookville gathered to see them depart.

The old professor at the academy had called Arthur to his study early that morning.

"As commander of your club," he said seriously, "you are in a measure responsible for the safety of your friends, Arthur. I know I can rely on your prudence, so I warn you not to be influenced by any wild desire on the part of the boys to be reckless or venturesome. The Orange River is open to you as far as the rapids. Beyond that the stream is dangerous in the extreme, and leads into a district that is so wild and rocky that it has scarcely been explored. Camp where you like this side of the rapids, but don't go beyond it."

"I will follow your directions, professor," said Arthur respectfully, and he intended to keep his word.

The sun was high and youthful spirits at the bubbling-point when at last Arthur gave the signal to depart. Even Barton Grey forgot his sullen spite amid the excitement of the moment, and the air rang with cheers as the little fleet left the shore amid the huzzas of the watching people.

The larger boat contained a tent and most of the stores of the club, and in this Captain Landon, Lieutenant Grey, and four others were seated. The fleet passed Shantytown in safety. Arthur was somewhat surprised at this, as he had expected a few parting compliments in the shape of mud-slings from their old-time enemies. He knew later, however, why this was, and in a manner that presented quite an incident of interest in their progress.

They had passed Shantytown and were sailing into the clear, sparkling waterway, dotted here and there with various crafts, when from a retired portion of the shore Arthur saw a boy making signals to him to stop. His heart beat faster as he imagined it to be Frank Marvin. He was not a little disappointed when he saw that it was no other than Rob Graham, the same boy who had the day previous informed him of Frank's escape from the cliff.

"What are you stopping us for?" demanded Barton, with an angry look at the ill-favored enemy.

"I want to speak with your captain," said Rob sheepishly. "Say, Arthur, come ashore."

Arthur hesitated about delaying the expedition, but something in Rob's face caused him to believe that he had intelligence of importance to impart to him. He therefore stepped ashore and walked a short distance from the boat with Rob, eyed curiously by his friends.

"Well, Rob," he said, "what is it? I haven't much time to spare."

"I want to ask you if you would take me on your expedition with you?" said Rob, with some embarrassment.

Arthur Landon stared amazedly at Rob as he made this bold proposition.

"Why, Rob," he said, "I couldn't do that."

"Why not?"

"You ain't a member of the club."



"That's so," murmured Rob ruefully, digging his toes in the sand.

"And you belong to Andy Brown's crowd, and the boys have no love for them, you know."

Arthur spoke gently. He recalled Rob's valuable information of the day previous, and, besides, the latter had never been an active foe to the club.

"I don't belong to the Brown Club now," remarked Rob, after a pause.

"No?" spoke Arthur incredulously.

"No."

"Since when?"

"Yesterday. They saw me with you, and called me a traitor. We had a fight, and I'm down on them. See here, Arthur, I'm terribly in earnest. I'm tired of training with those rough boys, but I had to, because I live near them. You fellows have more fun behaving yourselves than we do. Let me go with you and I'll be your cook and take care of the traps."

"I'm afraid I can't, Rob," said Arthur kindly, but seriously. "The boys don't like strangers."

"Ain't you the boss?"

Arthur smiled at Rob's high opinion of a captain's absolute power.

"And, besides," continued Rob, a cunning twinkle in his eye, "if you'll take me I'll tell you something more I have found out about your friend."

Arthur started eagerly.

"Frank Marvin, you mean?" he asked quickly.

"Yes."

"What about him?"

"If I tell you I can't stay with the Brown boys. Can I go with you if I do?"

Arthur hesitated. He was intensely curious and anxious to learn more of Frank Marvin's fate.

"See here, Rob," he said finally, "you are asking too much. You can be of little use to us, for we have boys to attend to every branch of camping out."

"But I know every foot of ground of the country—all the beaver-dams, all the rabbit-warrens. Oh, take me Arthur!"

"But what about Frank Marvin?"

"It's a curious story, and you may not believe me, but it's true. Andy Brown and his brother found him at a cabin down the river."

"Yes; I know that," assented Arthur.

"Well, it seems that Alston and the man with him hired Andy and Mark to take them to the place."

"I know that, also."

"Well, the boy was there. For some reason these men wanted him. The boy suspected it, escaped through a window, jumped on one of their horses, and made for the woods."

"For Brookville?"

"No; up the river toward the rapids. The men called him a horse-thief, and had men out looking for him, but the boy escaped. They traced him past the last town, and decided that he had gone into the wilds of the Black River country."

Arthur Landon looked startled. Why did Frank Marvin escape to that wild district? Why did these men pursue him so tenaciously?

"Go ahead," he said to Rob.

"There ain't much more to tell. The men came down to Shantytown in a boat to-day. They hired Andy and Mark to go with them as guides in search of the boy, and they went. I heard the two men talking."

"What did they say?"

"That the boy had a paper containing a secret to some treasure, that he had gone to find it, and that only by finding him could they locate it. Now, Arthur, I've done the square thing by you. Don't go back on me. I'd like to be decent and honest, like you fellows. Won't you help me?"

He seemed to be thoroughly in earnest. Arthur was thinking deeply. His interest in Frank Marvin was enhanced by the dramatic incidents that had marked his advent at Brookville.

"You stay here for a moment," he said to Rob, and returned to the boat.

Then he made a signal for the other three boats to approach.

"Boys," he said, as the crafts came together, "Rob Graham has given me some important information about our missing friend Frank Marvin, and the Brown crowd have beaten him for serving our interests. He wants to reform."

"Hear! Hear!" scoffed Barton Grey derisively.

"He wants us to take him along as a guide. I am in favor of it. He's in trouble on our account, and he may aid us to find another person who is in trouble on our account—Frank Marvin. All in favor of the proposition signify it by saying 'aye.'"

"Aye!" rang out a chorus of hearty voices, won to boyish enthusiasm by Arthur's clever allusion to the stranger who had rescued their cannon.

"No!" came vociferously from the lips of Barton Grey and two of his chosen friends.

"The ayes have it. Rob, come along!"

Barton scowled disagreeably.

"You'll have trouble out of this, mark me," he growled. "That boy ain't to be trusted."

But the delighted Rob was given a place in another boat, and did not know of Barton's displeasure, and the expedition proceeded on its way.

At several places along the river Arthur made seemingly careless inquiries. The result was to confirm Rob Graham's story. Several persons had seen Alston, and Rawson, and the Brown boys going toward the rapids. They said they were in pursuit of a horse-thief, and it made Arthur feel nervous to realize the grave charge against Frank when he knew it to be utterly unfounded.

The arrangement at Brookville had been for a two-weeks' sojourn at their new camp, and twice a week the club was to report their whereabouts and conditions to the professor at the academy. That night the boys camped at the last town on the river, and in the morning resumed their journey.

It was late in the afternoon when they came to a final halt. The spot where they paused seemed to be a veritable Garden of Eden. Beyond them, east and west, stretched a vast, picturesque alternation of forest, and prairie, and mountains. To the north the river ran swiftly, curved into a ravine through various deep waterways, and beyond they knew the rapids and the falls to be located. A wall of rock shut out the view in that direction, and this Arthur knew, from the professor's description, to be the barrier of limit to their wanderings.

The Black River and its unexplored windings and cañons and fastnesses of isolated forest and high plateau lay beyond. Every eye turned longingly toward the forbidden territory. Then they set about making their camp, and a scene of excitement and bustle ensued.

Rob Graham had proved himself a valuable auxiliary. He had been there several times before, and he knew where the dryest wood and finest rushes grew, and discovered a clear spring of water and several rare varieties of wild nuts and fruits.

"I'd like to show you the beaver-houses, captain," said Rob to Arthur, later in the day, when the tents had been arranged and all made shipshape for the night.

"Very well. Is it far from here?"

"About a mile up the stream."

"By boat?"

"We always went on foot, but there ain't any danger, so far from the rapids."

"All right. Four of you boys—Ernest, Abner, Martin,



and Dick—you come with us. Lieutenant Grey, you will command the encampment until I return."

The six were soon in the largest boat and speeding up the stream. A wall of rock shut them in as they proceeded, and the current was swift, but these tokens of peril the chattering sextet failed to notice carefully as they emerged into broad water again.

Rob Graham had not exaggerated the rare interest of the scene beyond. Every eye was enchained at the prospect. Near them were scores and scores of beaver-dams, and hundreds of the busy little animals were at work in full view.

Entranced, delighted at the novel scene, the boys watched the workers as they drifted unconsciously along. They had dropped their oars and had no eyes for the fast-flying landscape or the deepening current as newer and more curious earth formations kept them in a scene of rarest delight.

Sudden gloom brought them to their senses; a deep, sullen roar made them start; a cry of dismay from Rob Graham's lips made them look at his pale face with quickly aroused concern.

The boat, drawn by the current, had entered a deep gorge and was dashing through its rock-guarded confines rapidly. They had drifted into peril unconsciously. Every face blanched as they realized that beyond the gorge the rapids and the falls might be located.

"Oh, boys!" gasped Rob breathlessly. "No—no! Don't try the oars! It won't do any good! It's all my fault!"

"It's our own carelessness," spoke Arthur hastily. "Don't get excited, boys. We may strike open water beyond again. Rob, are the falls near?"

"Yes. When we leave here the rapids begin."

"And lead directly to the falls?"

"No; there are a hundred different courses. Some lead to the falls, some diverge and reach the Black River more gradually. We can't use the oars, nor we can't swim ashore."

"What can we do, then?" asked Ernest Borden distractedly.

"Let the boat drift. We may strike a rock and get ashore from it."

An impressive silence fell over the group. They watched the far end of the gorge, where the dying sunlight showed, and shuddered at the hollow echoes of the distant falls that penetrated the cañon.

"They say that after the drop of the falls you can't get back this way," murmured Rob portentously. "The rocks shut us in, and it's miles and miles to the other outlet, and the hills on the side are perpendicular, and no escape. Look at the boat. We're fairly flying through the water!"

The boat turned a curve and emerged from the cañon.

Not a word was spoken. Terror, dismay, made them speechless.

The rapids!

Before them was a sea of foaming, rock-crested water. Dusk shadowed the falls half a mile beyond. The boat was buffeted hither and thither—a mere plaything at the mercy of the wild vortex of waters.

On and on plunged the boat and its imperiled occupants. Never a look back at the dark gorge now—the beaver-dams beyond, the placid river near the camp—never a thought of their companions in that moment of danger.

Darkness shaded the landscape. Lieutenant Barton Grey's enjoyment of brief authority in his captain's absence changed to anxiety as he watched the gloom-laden river.

Night deepened, the hours went by, but no signs of their missing comrades.

"They've wandered away and are lost!" commented Barton gloomily. "It's all that Rob Graham's fault. I told Arthur he'd lead us into trouble, and he has done it!"

"He's gone!"

It would be impossible to describe the dismay and rage of Robert Alston as his companion, Rawson, uttered these words, announcing the escape of the boy whose detention and the possession of the coveted paper of Dougall meant so much to him.

They could hear the hoofs of the horse echo in the distance, and then Rawson sprang to the remaining steed and started in pursuit. It was an hour later when he returned, and his face wore a weary, disappointed look.

"No use," he said to Alston. "The boy is a superb rider. I couldn't even catch a glimpse of him."

"What are we to do?"

"Wait for daylight."

"And find that he has gone to some magistrate and revealed all?"

"He won't do that."

"Why not?"

"Because Dougall must have told him not to do so."

"Why do you surmise that?"

"Because, if Dougall intended that course, he would have ordered the boy in that way. No; he expects that boy alone, or with what aid he may obtain, to secure the treasure."

"I guess you are right," replied Alston thoughtfully. "You think the boy has gone toward the Black River country?"

"Beyond doubt."

"Then we must follow him. He may lead us direct to the sunken treasure. You gave orders about Dougall?"

"To be closely confined. Near fear; he won't easily escape again."

After a brief consultation, immediate action was agreed upon. The half-breed was employed to start at once on the trail, and Alston and Rawson also joined in the pursuit.

Early the next morning they met at a place agreed upon. They had traced the fugitive for many miles. He had reached the farthest town on the river, and at daylight was going still north.

Alston paid the half-breed, enjoined him to secrecy, and they returned to his cabin. Two hours later he was at Brookville, and saw Andy and Mark Brown. That interview, as the reader already knows, Rob Graham had overheard and reported to Arthur Landon. It resulted in Alston hiring the boys to act as guide to and through the Black River district.

The half-breed, Onaloka, as he was called, agreed to accompany them. Thus there were five in the party. They did not go by boat, Andy Brown deciding the river route to be too unsafe, but secured a wagon. This took them to Elmville, the last outpost town of civilization, where they arrived in advance of the Brookville Boys' Club. Here they left the wagon. All along the route they had stated that a boy named Frank Marvin was a horse-thief and that they were in pursuit of him. This story was circulated industriously.

Ten miles north of Elmville they came upon an old hunter. He was riding a sorry-looking horse and leading another one. At a glance Onaloka recognized the latter animal.

"See!" he said to Alston. "The horse the boy stole!"

Alston hailed the man:

"I say, stranger!"

"Hello! What is it?"

"Where did you get that horse?"

"It was given to me to take to Elmville."

"Who by?"

"A likely lad, who paid me to leave it there."

"Marvin!" uttered Rawson eagerly, and they crowded around the stranger.

A few moments' conversation afforded Alston some important information.

The stranger was a hunter and lived in a hut up the



stream. That morning a boy—undoubtedly Frank Marvin—had rode up to his place and offered him two dollars to return the horse to Elmvile.

He had made numerous explicit inquiries about the Black River country, and had purchased an old boat to continue his journey.

"We are on the trail!" remarked Alston, with satisfaction, as they continued on their way. "The boy is certainly going for the treasure. We will find him, overtake him, or watch him till he locates the treasure."

They found it a weary jaunt to the hills, and it was not until the ensuing night they reached a dark mountain pass which Andy Brown said led to a narrow ledge of rocks overlooking the Black River ravine.

Alston and Rawson looked startled as they halted finally. On a shelf of rock they could look down sheer 500 feet. Spreading to the very horizon to the north, the broad valley began at the falls and was lost in the hazy distance miles and miles away.

"That is the Black River Valley," said Andy.

"And how are we going to reach it?" asked Alston.

"By descending the mountainside."

"Here!" cried Alston, aghast.

"Yes."

"It's certain death!"

"It's less dangerous than the rapids."

"Did you ever descend here?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"We made a rope of vines, went down to the second ledge, and so on until we reached the valley."

It looked extremely perilous, but Onaloka made several stout ropes and the descent began.

And after numerous falls and exciting adventures the pursuers of Frank Marvin landed at the banks of the great Black River.

They were destined to meet some strange adventures ere they again reached Brookville.

And they were not the only wanderers in the ravine.

Frank Marvin had preceded them, and was already on his way to find James Dougall's mysterious treasure.

## CHAPTER VI.

### WRECKED IN PORT.

"Oh, boys, this is terrible!"

Dick Wadsworth gasped out the words forcibly as the boat containing himself and his five devoted companions in peril seemed at the complete mercy of the rushing, whirling current that led to the rapids.

After leaving the cañon the waterway had widened considerably, and they could see where the flecked course to the falls was full of rocks, small and large. The place widened here like a fan and lost itself again between high walls beyond, which the boys felt assured was the Black River country and its surrounding barriers to exit or escape.

"Cling to the boat!" was what Arthur Landon shouted time and again as the craft was whirled along swiftly.

He had recovered his presence of mind, and his forced calmness inspired Rob Graham with like self-confidence, for the latter seized a rope and was ready to catch at any rock that might appear to stay their progress.

Both saw the folly of this experiment a few minutes later, however, for even if their course was delayed they could not reach the shore, and if they could reach the shore the inaccessible walls lining the stream shut out escape.

Their companions, pale and full of suspense, watched silently the course of the boat, and huddled together and saw the falls come nearer and nearer each moment. They were powerless to help themselves, and they only hoped

that the cataract was not of dangerous magnitude and that its gradual incline might enable a safe passage.

Suddenly Rob uttered a startled cry:

"We ain't going over the falls at all!"

"What!" ejaculated the boys, in a chorus.

"Yes. See, we've been drifted into a narrow waterway that branches here. Quick, boys, dodge your heads!"

His warning came none too soon. The boat, borne along by some fierce diverging current, had penetrated a single enormous rock, through which it seemed to have cut a clear tunnel, and there was just room for the boat to graze through. Utter darkness supervened, then they came out into the light again, only to strike a new tunnel. The rocks seemed honeycombed with these dark passageways. All the time they were apparently descending, for darkness became more apparent, and the walls above them were so high they shut out all the heavens except a small streak of blue sky.

The boat began to go less rapidly as they again reached a more open space, and its movements became erratic again. They soon knew why this was. The roar of the falling waters was behind them now. They had passed the falls, or, rather, rounded them. They had, by a dangerous and accidental course, reached the valley, and were now in the whirlpool below the cataract. So rapid was the action of the hour that they had no eye for the picturesque, and did not note the beautiful transition to a magnificent valley, guarded by the falls, the rocks, and the forests. They thought only of immediate peril, and as the boat danced over rocks and eddies, they saw that the whirlpool was more dangerous than the rapids.

Crash!

With a shock, the boat struck a rock. The crisis had come—the catastrophe they had feared all along had been precipitated by a side movement of the craft. It seemed splintered to pieces in a flash. Six struggling forms found themselves in the water, dumfounded, confused, helpless.

"Strike for the shore! It's safe here!" rang out Arthur's tones clear and authoritative. "Don't lose courage. We are all right!" and the floundering sextet grasped at rocks, and waded, and swam, and ran toward an outlined grove of trees that showed dimly in the gathering twilight.

The waterway was treacherous where the boat had been wrecked, but, once past the eddying current, it became more shallow and navigable. Five minutes later the eager glance of Arthur Landon rested with satisfaction on his five friends, safe on land by his side and none the worse for their recent exciting adventures, except for a thorough wetting and a few bruises from the protruding rocks.

"Hurrah! We're safe!" cried Rob Graham jubilantly.

His shout of delight was not echoed by his companions. To them the situation was a serious one. Their reckless nomad companion from Shantytown had carte blanche from his parents to rove the woods at his sweet will, to go and come when he liked. With them, however, anxious friends would magnify any unexplained absence into some terrible accident. They all knew this, Arthur Landon most of all.

He scarcely blamed himself for the accident that had separated them from their friends. The professor at the Brookville Academy had told him not to go beyond the camp, but the visit to the beaver-houses was scarcely exceeding the limits of exploration. It was their heedlessness, once there, in not watching the boat that led to all their present trouble.

As captain of the club, Arthur knew that a deep responsibility rested on him for the safety of his companions. Those with him were all right now, but what would those remaining at the camp do when they found he did not return? He knew Barton Grey's venturesome spirit, and feared that, left in command of the camp, he would insist on a search for their missing companions and lead his charges into trouble.



"Well, boys," he said as cheerfully as he could under the circumstances, "our heedlessness has cost us dear."

"I think it's quite jolly," said Rob.

"It would be if there was any certainty about our reaching the camp at once," said Arthur.

Rob looked disappointed.

"You ain't anxious to leave this elegant place, are you?" he asked.

"Yes. All our energies must be directed to regain our friends at once," replied Arthur seriously. "Of course, we will have to wait until morning, to see where we are, and then try and go back beyond the falls."

Bob chuckled serenely.

"You'll never get back that way," he said.

"Why not?"

"The boat is gone; and even with it you couldn't do it. No, boys; you're shut in here, and here you'll have to stay, or find some place where the sides of the ravine ain't too steep and make vine-ladders to get from ledge to ledge to the top of the ravine hills. That ain't easy, either, and you may have to travel over 100 miles to where the valley ends before you can get out of this place."

The prospect was certainly not a pleasant one to Arthur. He imagined the anxiety and distress of their friends at Brookville, and with some disappointment realized that the expedition had at its very inception resulted in the complete demoralization of all their cherished plans, so long and joyfully thought of during the spring session at the academy.

However, he was philosophical enough to take things as they happened, and thankful that they had escaped the perils that had menaced them during their exciting journey. Then, recalling the rumor that the valley abounded in wild game, and possibly a few beasts of prey, he called the boys around him with the old authoritative dignity of a commander.

"We'll camp here for the night," he said. "Here, Rob, cut some stout cudgels first. You, Ernest, select a spot for a camp, and Dick and the others get some dry wood together."

Arthur's orders were speedily obeyed, and enough dry matches found in their pockets to start a fire. They had selected a cavernous depression in the rocks for a fire-place, and as the wood burned briskly their spirits revived.

The sextet was divided into two watches, and Arthur and Ernest and Rob became sentinels at midnight. The chances of escape from the valley were the themes of thought with Arthur Landon through the lonely morning hours, and he was silent and reflective, while Rob and Ernest talked briskly.

It was on toward daylight when they allowed the fire to go out and ventured to sleep, leaving the camp unguarded. Fatigue and excitement made their slumbers deep, and it was late in the morning when they awoke.

They made a primitive and hurried breakfast. One of the boys had retained his knapsack, and this contained a generous lunch, of which the hungry boys partook with keen appetites. Then Arthur and Rob went out on a reconnoitering expedition.

It was long after noon when they returned to the camp. Arthur was completely disheartened. Investigation had forced upon his mind the unpleasant fact that there was no possible hope of escape by way of the falls, and that, while a descent from the hills shutting in the valley was feasible, to ascend was very difficult.

The grandeur and extent of the valley overpowered him. Its wildness and loneliness were sublime. They seemed as much shut out from the world as though in some remote wilderness. In time he knew they would be rescued, or they would reach the other end of the ravine, but the anxiety of their friends would be poignant, not knowing

that they had escaped the rapids and the falls, not even knowing that they had gone that way.

"I don't know what to do," said Arthur perplexedly to his companions. "If we start for the other end how do we know that we can find it—that we will not starve or perish from exposure ere we complete the journey? If we stay here Barton may suspect our dilemma and in some way reach us."

Undecided and irresolute, the day passed for the little camp. There was a break in its monotony toward evening, when the venturesome Rob returned from a short exploring expedition.

He was quite excited, and startled his friends with the announcement:

"Boys, we ain't alone in the valley!"

Arthur looked curious and interested.

"Why do you think so, Rob?" he asked.

"Because I've made a discovery."

"What is that?"

"I went down the river, searching for some pieces of our boat."

"It was all broken up!"

"Yes, we thought so; but I reckoned we might find some of its contents along the shore."

"And did you?"

"No. The boat I found, however—that is, an even half of it. The craft split in two on a rock, and there, tightly wedged in, half of it lies. We can reach it to-morrow, if it's worth the while. While I was looking at it I saw the wreck of another boat near it. Some one has been here, and lately, too, for the broken timbers were fresh, as if lately smashed."

"The boat may have floated here," suggested Ernest.

"Well, we can visit it to-morrow," said Rob. "Here's a lot of nuts and berries I found, and some wild-geese eggs. Let's get supper."

It was dark when the meal was concluded, and they were deep in plans for the ensuing day, when there was a sudden interruption.

"Hello!"

From the river the call, clear and joyous, in a boyish tone of voice, startled them.

The camp-fire glare showed a form moving on the rocks toward them. The figure hurried forward and reached the shore with an excited shout.

Arthur Landon uttered a glad, delighted cry as he recognized the newcomer in the full flare of the firelight.

It was Frank Marvin!

The meeting of the captain of the Brookville Boys' Club and Frank Marvin was a strange and startling one, but its occurrence had been brought about by the most natural circumstances in the world.

These may be briefly related to the reader. When Frank Marvin had sprung to the saddle of the horse outside the cabin of the half-breed he thought only of escape.

He recognized in Alston and Rawson men who were cruel and unprincipled, and he feared a detention.

The precious secret to Dougall's treasure was still safe in his possession, and he must guard its security at all hazards.

The horse he rode was a fleet-footed animal and fairly flew over the narrow river road.

Ten miles' run brought Frank to a level prairie, and as he glanced around he could see no one in sight.

Proceeding more leisurely, therefore, he reflected deeply over the probable best course to pursue.

His enemies were bold and desperate men, powers in the community where they resided, and he, a helpless boy and a stranger, was no match for their shrewdness and duplicity.

Dougall's directions had been explicit. He must search for the treasure alone, or, at least, only with trusted assistants.



If he went to some magistrate and revealed his secret the treasure would probably be found, but as Dougall's conservator Alston would secure its control.

No; it was a case where individual effort alone could aid the distracted Dougall against the evil designs of his enemies.

Some one must obtain the treasure, secure Dougall's escape, deliver the gold to him, and see him fly to obscure security.

Without intending it, Frank Marvin had become pledged and involved in the affair. Its adventurous issues had excited him, his sympathies for the poor lunatic made him unselfish.

Thus he had decided on a definite course of action. He had rode to Elmville, given the horse, a short distance beyond it, to a man to return, bought a boat, and with what limited information of the Black River district he could obtain had started on his perilous quest for the treasure, alone and unaided.

The same course that Arthur and his companions had taken had been pursued by Frank, only that he was less fortunate in evading the falls. His boat had been carried bodily over the cataract, but at a point where its descent was broken by shelves of rock. He was an expert swimmer, and reached the shore beyond in safety, but his boat was lost and wrecked.

All that day and the ensuing one he devoted to a study of the paper that James Dougall had given him. Its terms were explicit enough, only that a person must proceed intelligibly. Frank, therefore, explored all the branches of the ravine that diverged below the falls and tried to select the right one, so as to lose no time in reaching the spot where the treasure-boat had sunk.

By the merest accident he had seen the reflection of the boys' camp-fire, and the welcome that greeted him dispelled all the loneliness of their surroundings.

He was amazed as he listened to Arthur's story of how they had come to the valley. His own story, however, he did not tell in detail. It was only when he and Arthur were alone, and he learned how much the latter knew of his adventures with Alston and Rawson, that he took him into his entire confidence.

They had withdrawn out of hearing of the others, and Frank's face was quite serious as he said:

"I suppose you know in part what brought me here, Arthur? I know you would not betray a secret, nor shall I be doing wrong, as we are so strangely thrown together again, in explaining freely what you already suspect."

And then he related his adventures since seeing Dougall. Arthur Landon was an intent auditor. Frank related all that had occurred, and his dramatic narrative made Arthur excited and enthusiastic.

Here was a mystery and a romance that was as captivating as fiction, and its promised dénouement, resulting in the righting of a great wrong, appealed to every chivalrous instinct in Arthur Landon's generous nature.

"Oh, Frank!" he cried longingly; "if I had only started with the consent of my friends to come here, and they were not anxious about me, how I would like to join you in this romantic enterprise!"

Frank smiled at his friend's enthusiasm.

"You may have to help me," he said significantly.

"How so?"

"You want to get home?"

"Of course."

"Then I very much fear you will have to go to the other end of the ravine to get out."

"But my friends—"

"You are anxious about them?"

"Terribly."

There was a shrewd, peculiar light in Frank Marvin's eyes as a sudden wild thought struck him.

"Suppose you could let them know your situation?"

"Oh, that is impossible!"

"And inform them that you were going down the valley, and were safe and well and would soon be home again?"

"What's the use of discussing a chimera?"

"Well, well, answer my question; if this could be done, what then?"

"I would be content."

"And would aid me?"

"Gladly!"

"Then wait until to-morrow and I'll startle you," said Frank mysteriously. "Meantime I'll tell you my plans. I think I can locate the sunken boat."

"From the paper Dougall gave you?"

"Yes."

"Is it far from here?"

"About sixty miles down the ravine."

"Are you going to walk it?"

"No. There is enough of the two wrecked boats left to make a convenient raft."

"That's grand!"

"The river is navigable and placid in the valley here. I believe I can reach my destination in three days and leave the valley in two days more."

"Why do you hurry so?" asked Arthur.

"I fear those men."

"Alston and Rawson?"

"Yes."

"You think they will follow you?"

"Certainly. Didn't you say that Rob told you they would?"

"That's so, but they ain't here yet."

"They may be. I didn't know of your being here until I found you."

Early the next morning a complete change in the doings of the boys was effected.

Arthur insisted on Frank's leadership, and he kept the boys busy. His ingenuity resulted in dragging the wrecked club boat ashore. Several packages still remaining in it were examined by Frank with eager interest.

They found a quantity of flour, but badly wetted, some cans of meat, a reel of string, some tools, and a small, rolled-up tent. By noon they had these things in order, and the wood from the two boats was dragged to a point of rocks, where Frank started a new camp.

The boys seemed to be infused with new energy as they watched his busy movements, and some fish were added to their noonday meal.

It was after they had concluded the enjoyable repast when Frank Marvin startled them with the words:

"Now, boys, bring me the string, the old sail-cloth, and those newspapers I have spread out to dry."

"Why, what are you going to do, Frank?" asked Arthur curiously.

And Frank Marvin mystified them completely as he answered, with a pleasant smile:

"I'm going to make a kite!"

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE KITE.

"A kite!" echoed Arthur Landon, in bewildered surprise.

"Yes."

"You must want to waste time!"

"Not at all."

"But a kite—what's that for?"

"Can't you think?"

"No."

"Nor guess?"

"Not for the life of me."

"Well, then, I'll tell you. Here is string, paste, paper,



and wood. I'm going to make a kite, sail it as high as it will go, and then cut it loose."

A dawning light of intelligence gleamed in Arthur's eyes.

"I begin to understand," he murmured.

"We'll use some of the old sail-cloth for a tail to the kite," resumed Frank. "On its end we'll tie a letter. You write it, Arthur. When the kite goes above the cliffs we'll cut it loose and trust to fortune to waft it near enough to the camp of the boys outside to attract their attention."

"What an idea!" cried Ernest, in open-mouthed admiration of the ingenious Frank.

The latter set to work industriously at once. The kite was completed within half an hour, and the string attached. Then, at his direction, Arthur penciled the following note:

"Boys: We—Arthur Landon, Ernest Borden, Dick Wadsworth, Morton Wells, Abner Wade, Rob Graham, and Frank Marvin—are in the valley, and will have to row down 100 miles to get out. It will take a week or more to reach your camp. Inform our friends at Brookville and tell them we are safe and well. If you receive this all right wait until the wind changes and fly the kite as we have done, and cut it loose, so as to fall in the valley."

This was tied to the tail of the kite. With intense suspense, the rest of the boys watched Arthur raise the kite for Frank. It rose gracefully in the fresh breeze of the valley. Yard by yard the string was paid out, until the flying messenger was a mere speck in the sky.

Frank cut the string. He watched the kite dart and descend far beyond the highest ledge of rocks.

"I wonder if they will see it?" murmured Arthur anxiously.

"We shall know by to-morrow," replied Frank encouragingly. "I tried to estimate the location of the camp from what you told me, and I believe they will. It may be possible that they can gain the cliffs and signal us. Anyway, you, Rob, and Ernest had better watch the ledges, and, when the wind changes, the entire valley."

All that day the boys worked at the raft. It was not completed before the ensuing morning, however. With some satisfaction Frank noticed that the wind had changed its direction and was blowing favorable to a reply from the outer world from which they were so strangely cut off.

They had found a lantern in the boat, and he was fixing it, when a shout from Rob Graham startled him.

"Look!" cried the excited boy. "The kite!"

Sure enough, a dim object was coming momentarily more clearly into view. It grew clearer and less indistinct, ascended, careened, and began to fall.

Arthur Landon was in a perfect fever of suspense.

"Oh, Frank!" he ejaculated joyfully; "they received our message!"

"It looks so."

The kite began to whirl and descend some distance from them.

"It must contain some return message," said Arthur. "I hope it falls where we can get it."

The hope was a vain one. The cut-away string caught on a rock. Forty feet up the side of the ravine the kite fluttered to a halt.

Arthur looked disappointed, but brightened up as Frank said:

"It's all right."

"What is?"

"The message."

"The boys sent us one?"

"Yes. You see the tail has no paper attached, but look at the paper front of the kite."

A shout of satisfaction rang on the silent air of the valley as the boys followed with their eyes the direction Frank had indicated.

Across the face of the kite, traced in great black letters, was, indeed, a reply to their message: a terse, scrawled signal from their former companions, the two letters:

"O. K.!"

"O. K.!"—all right!" cried Arthur delightedly. "Now, Frank Marvin, my mind relieved, I am at your service."

They noisily discussed the voyage down the river, and with lightened hearts helped Frank complete the raft. Moving it to the bank, they placed their traps upon it.

"When do we start?" asked Rob Graham eagerly.

"Early in the morning," replied Frank.

But their plans were doomed to a radical change within the hour.

Ernest came rushing into camp with an armful of wood and an excited face.

"Some one is coming!" he ejaculated breathlessly.

Arthur and Frank started to their feet in alarm.

"Who is it—where?" they demanded, in a breath.

Ernest pointed down the stream.

There, plainly visible, coming to the very spot where the camp was located, was a party of five persons. At them Arthur and Frank glanced once, and then their eyes met.

Rob Graham indulged in a low whistle of amazement.

"Andy and Mark Brown!" he exclaimed.

"Do you know them?" asked Arthur of Frank.

The latter was slightly pale, but he answered quite steadily:

"Yes; it is the man Alston and his confederates. They have followed me here, sure enough, and we are likely to have some trouble with them."

"We'll stand by you, all the same!" cried Rob Graham doughtily. "Let 'em come!"

"What shall we do?" asked Arthur anxiously.

"Hide and watch them, and see what they do," replied Frank calmly.

A minute later the boys had scampered to the shelter of the rocks overhead.

And steadily advancing down the river, on the opposite bank, came their dreaded enemies.

"Hello! What's this?"

The words were plainly audible to the six boys huddled together behind a great frowning rock just above the place where their camp-fire still burned and the newly constructed raft lay at its moorings.

They had watched the advancing forms of Alston's party with interested glances, and as they noticed that they seemed to be proceeding aimlessly they hoped they would not discover them. Just as they passed a point directly opposite, however, the keen eye of the half-breed, Onaloka, had discerned the raft.

"Look!" he had spoken sententiously, and then, with the words chronicled, Alston had come to a halt.

The stream was shallow at that point and filled with half-submerged rocks. Alston at once started across, followed by the others. In silent speculation for some time he gazed at the recent evidences of an encampment, then he finally hurried to Onaloka.

"Some one has been here?" he said interrogatively.

"Yes."

"The boy?"

"Two—three—a dozen of them, maybe."

Alston looked surprised and annoyed.

"Then he has brought friends to his aid. Where are they?"

"Gone. Maybe frightened away. The raft—see. They were going down the river."

Alston frowned darkly at this evidence of Frank Marvin's industry and pertinacity.

"We'll take that ourselves," he remarked; "and we'll look for the boy later."

"Frank—Frank! What are you about?"



In their espionage among the rocks Arthur Landon had uttered these words excitedly as Frank sprang to his feet.

"I'm not going to be robbed!" he replied indignantly. "Excuse me, Mr. Alston, but that is my property."

He had sprung from the sheltering ledge of rocks and landed in the midst of his enemies so suddenly that the last one of them recoiled in profound amazement.

"You!" cried Alston, regaining his breath partially.

"Yes; and, as I said, that raft is mine. It's small business stealing another person's property!"

Alston flushed angrily at the bold and accusing confrontation.

"It's your raft, is it?" he sneered. "Well, you can have it; but we want you! We want you as a horse-thief, young man, and— Catch him, Onaloka!"

The Indian half-breed moved forward to put Alston's command into execution, but halted as Frank seized a cudgel and put himself on the defensive.

"Don't you touch me!" he cried spiritedly; "or you'll get the worst of it! I stole no horse of you. You forced me to escape on one, and I returned it to Elmville. You use that claim as a subterfuge to get me into your power and rob me of my secret, but you won't!"

"You young, insolent villain!" cried Alston, in rageful tones. "Seize him, I say!"

"Leave that boy alone, or it will be worse for you!"

Every eye was cast upward. By unanimity, or from secret orders, Captain Landon's reserve had arisen to their feet.

Each one bore in his hand a large rock, and, poising these, they looked grimly down upon the scene below.

"If you touch that boy, or that boat, we'll give you a shower of rocks that will make you wish you hadn't!" called out Arthur decidedly.

They formed a menacing-looking coterie as they were revealed to the amazed vision of Alston and his party. At a glance the latter seemed to discern plainly that he was at a disadvantage, that his new enemies were very much in earnest, and that he appeared very ridiculous and unmanly in his cowardly attack on Frank Marvin.

He glared angrily at Arthur and the others, and muttered an inaudible threat against Frank.

"Come on!" he growled savagely to his companions. "Let them have the old raft. As to you, young thief"—to Frank—"I'll have the officers of the law attend to your case!"

Arthur and the others came running down to the camp-fire as soon as Alston retreated across the stream.

Frank Marvin looked serious.

"I'm sorry that they found us," he said regretfully.

"Why so?"

"They will bother us so we cannot proceed. Of course, they are after me, and either expect to steal the paper from me, or by watching me locate the treasure."

This seemed probable, for an hour later a camp-fire gleamed down the river, and its location showed that the men had selected a spot which commanded a full view of the place.

"They intend to worry us, I can see that," said Arthur. "We can't move without their seeing us. Well, there's one thing—they won't dare to hurt us. Ain't there some way of evading them, Frank?"

"I'll see," replied Frank thoughtfully.

It was about an hour later, and he and Arthur were seated by the camp-fire, discussing a plan to abandon the raft and try and steal past their watchful enemies, when Frank Marvin started violently.

Near-by, from behind a rock, he had seen a prowling form, and he recognized a pair of glittering, peering eyes as those of the half-breed Onaloka.

Leaning toward Arthur, he said, in a low tone of voice:

"Keep on talking, and in a minute or two ask me how I managed to secrete the paper from Alston in Onaloka's cabin."

Arthur looked startled at the strange request, but comprehended that the keen-witted Frank had some intelligent motive in asking it.

In quite a loud tone, a moment later, he said:

"You did well in hiding the paper you had from Alston, Frank."

Frank laughed loudly.

"Yes; I found a good hiding-place."

"Where was that?"

"In the sole of my shoe."

"Do you carry it there now?"

"Yes. It's a safe place, and Alston never thought of it!"

"Ha! ha! He ain't very shrewd!"

Frank had kept his eye fixed on the skulking form near the rock. He now saw the half-breed glide away toward the river.

"Success!" he said, in tones of satisfaction, as he rose to his feet.

"What do you mean?" asked the mystified Arthur.

"That I think I have devised a plan to get rid of our troublesome neighbors."

"Alston and the others?"

"Yes."

"How is that?"

"When I told you to ask me something about Dougall's paper I saw a spy near-by here."

"I imagined it was something of that sort you were up to."

"Onaloka was behind a rock yonder," explained Frank. "As soon as he obtained the apparently valuable information our overheard conversation imparted he hurried away."

"To tell Alston!"

"Undoubtedly."

"You were foolish to reveal so important a secret," said Arthur.

"I had a purpose. Give me a pencil, Arthur. I deem all measures fair to prevent these men robbing poor me. Dougall and I are going to try and drive them away."

"How can you do it?" asked the perplexed Arthur.

"By visiting them boldly in their camp," was Frank's startling response.

Whatever Frank Marvin's plan he was only a short time in arranging its execution, for after being busily engaged at writing at the camp-fire for the space of less than five minutes he arose to his feet, seized a cudgel, and said to Arthur:

"I'm going."

"Not to Alston's camp?"

"Yes."

"You may get into trouble," said Arthur anxiously.

"I hope not. Expect me back soon. They won't hurt or detain me, I guess."

Frank reflected deeply as he proceeded down the bank of the river.

He had decided on deceiving his enemies, and he knew the experiment to be a risky one.

While it involved some duplicity, he felt justified in employing it to baffle Alston's evil plans.

"I'll tell no falsehood," he said stanchly; "but if Alston accepts the seeming as the real I shall not undeceive him."

Frank advanced boldly as he reached the camp-fire of his enemies.

He amazed Alston and the others by walking within the radius of the firelight glow.

Alston sprang to his feet, with a cry of amazement. Frank had formulated his plan of action and began to speak at once.

"Mr. Alston," he said, "I have come to see if we can't arrange affairs mutually agreeable."

Alston looked excited and curious.

"What do you mean?" he asked.



"About our going down the river on the raft. What are you following me for this way?"

"To get a paper that don't belong to you, as you well know," replied Alston frowningly. "Have you come to give it up?"

"No, sir!"

"You ain't, eh? Well, what do you expect us to do?"

"Let us go our way. We want to get back to Brookville."

"And take the treasure with you on the way? Oh, there's no use fooling about it! You know the secret of the sunken boat."

"Well, then, if you won't, we'll have to fight you, that's all!"

"Fight us!" sneered Alston derisively. "Here, you don't leave just yet!"

Frank had talked vaguely on purpose. As he started to leave the camp there happened just what he anticipated.

Alston had seized him forcibly and flung him to the ground. Frank made no resistance.

"Now, then, search him!" cried Rawson, coming to Alston's side.

"I guess he won't fool us quite so much this time!" chuckled Onaloka.

Andy and Mark Brown looked on grinningly.

Alston had seized Frank's foot.

"Leave my foot alone!" cried Frank.

"Aha! We've found you out at last, have we?" jeered Alston.

He pried back the sole of Frank's shoe and drew out a folded paper.

"Found!" he almost yelled in his delight.

"What shall we do with the boy?" asked Rawson.

"Tie him to a tree. We don't want him to go back to the others just yet. They may have firearms."

Frank Marvin smiled complacently.

He saw Alston's evil face all aglow with exultation as he eagerly opened the folded piece of paper.

Rawson and Onaloka had tied Frank loosely to a tree. Then the former hurried to where Alston was reading the paper by the fire.

"Is it the clue?" he asked eagerly.

"Beyond doubt."

"Does it tell where the treasure is located?"

"Explicitly!"

There was a low-toned, hurried consultation between the two men.

Then orders were given to break camp at once. What traps they had were hastily packed, and within half an hour all was ready for departure.

Alston came up to Frank as the others started away.

"Boy," he said, "you know where I'm going?"

"Yes. After the treasure."

"Exactly; and I'm going to find it. If you fellows follow us you'll get into trouble when I return to Brookville. If you talk too much of what you know you'll regret it!"

Frank was silent. Alston kicked the fire out, and then Frank saw him and his companions disappear in the darkness.

It was, perhaps, two hours later when he was relieved from his uncomfortable captivity. He knew that Alston expected that his friends would rescue him, only he wanted time to start for the treasure before they could get on his close trail, if they were venturesome enough to attempt that bold exploit after his threats.

Arthur and his companions had become uneasy at his long absence, and, seeing the camp-fire extinguished, had started to learn what had occurred.

Arthur released Frank and looked around curiously.

"Where are the men?" he asked.

"Gone."

"For good?"

"Yes."

There was a mystifying smile on Frank's face.

"Not after the treasure?"

"They think so."

"Then they robbed you of the clue?"

"They robebd me of a paper—yes."

"What was it?"

"A paper I prepared for contingencies. We won't be troubled by them any more, Arthur. The paper they believe to be the clue will send them sixty miles out of the way. Come, Arthur, we won't delay. Before midnight we must start to find the hidden treasure."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### AN EXCITING DISCOVERY.

Arthur Landon's curiosity was considerably excited over his friend's strange success in ridding them of troublesome neighbors, and was not satisfied until Frank had related in detail his adventures with their enemies.

"It was enough for me to know that Onaloka had been spying on us," said Frank, "and I told the truth at our river camp when I said that Mr. Dougall's paper was in my shoe. It was then, but later I removed it, and, knowing if I fell in with Alston and his men they would submit me to renewed search, I substituted a paper I wrote myself. It was a vague direction, but it sent these men down the east valley instead of the west, and if they go sixty miles to find the supposed treasure-place, it will be from three to five days at the most, even if they discover the ruse at once, before they can get on our track again."

"And then they will have to retrace their way to this starting-point again, won't they?" asked Arthur.

"Yes; so we will virtually have a week's start of them. Now, I propose to start on our journey at once."

"To-night?"

"This very hour. The stream, as we have learned from exploration, cuts clear down the valley a straight course for many miles, and we must not delay for fear these men might suspect something and return and find and follow us."

The novelty and excitement of a night voyage pleased the boys, and they were soon adrift on the raft.

Long poles had been cut, and Frank took the command of the little craft, guiding it past the rocks that marked the division of the stream into several waterways, and selecting the west branch.

"You see," he said to Arthur, "Alston and his friends have taken the east channel, and that dividing wall of stone, which I believe runs the entire length of the valley, shuts us out. He may be within a mile of us when we reach the locality of the sunken treasure-boat, and yet not able to reach us without traveling 120 miles. Farther down, this cañon is divided into forks, I imagine, for Mr. Dougall's last note to me, that was intercepted by Alston, refers to the north fork."

"But how do you know we are going right now?" asked Arthur.

"The paper tells me. We are safe to float at random until we gain the branching cañon, sixty miles north. Then we will have the trouble in locating exactly the treasure-place. Then I will show you the final, explicit directions of the paper."

At daylight a halt was ordered. They had entered a deep, natural cañon, shut in on all sides by high hills, and lovely in the extreme. The stream was clear and placid as a brook, and only occasionally presented a barrier to their progress in the shape of a rock or shallows, and the flat-bottomed raft passed these with only slight difficulty.

They partook of their primitive breakfast with rare relish. Rob Graham, appointed forager and caterer, had not failed to redeem his promise to be a satisfactory commissary. He had fish and berries and nuts, and, best of all, a rude but palatable hoe-cake made out of the flour, and



a draft from the pellucid stream to wash it down made temperance advocates of the young adventurers for time to come.

Arthur had not revealed entirely the secret of Frank's mission to the district, nor had Rob told all that he knew to the other boys. They were content to know that Frank had been sent on a search for a boat that had sunk in the cañon years previous, and that it contained considerable gold. Frank had determined to tell them more when they reached the treasure-spot, for he needed their cooperation, perhaps, and he knew that they must find out all in case he really discovered the sunken treasure.

The course was somewhat more difficult that day, but they journeyed nearly thirty miles. The spirits of the boys rose as they realized that they were nearing the end of the valley, and once out of it could return home or to the club camp without much delay.

At eventide of the third day Frank Marvin ordered a halt at a spot which he knew, from reference to the Dougall paper, must be very near the place of the sunken boat. At noon they had reached a divergence in the course of the stream precisely similar to that which marked its extent just below the falls.

"The north fork," thought Frank, and he selected one of the river's branches the farthest deflecting from the main channel, and the boat was directed into it.

At sunset, as has been said, he made camp. At dark he lit the lantern they had, and, telling Arthur confidentially to join him when he signaled him, left the camp.

A few minutes later, from the brush by the riverside, Frank waved the lantern, and was joined by Arthur, who came from the camp as agreed upon.

"I want to talk with you alone," said Frank seriously, as they found a sheltered copse and seated themselves on the grass.

"About the treasure?" asked Arthur.

"Of course that is uppermost in my mind just now," confessed Frank. "You see, I am not afraid to trust the other boys, and I know they will help us all they can, only, even if we find the gold, it is only half the plan accomplished."

"How so?"

"Because if all the boys knew of it, naturally when we return to camp or Brookville they will talk of it."

"Very likely."

"Then, if I have the treasure, people will ask what right I have to it. It belongs to Mr. Dougall."

"Well, then, why not take it to some honest and prominent man of Brookville and tell him all the circumstances of the case?"

"Because eventually it would come under Alston's control."

"How so?"

"As conservator of Mr. Dougall's estate."

"But Alston is a villain."

"Not at all in the eyes of the community. And the story of two or three boys won't convince the public that he is. No; they would ascribe his coming here and following me to zeal in his friend Dougall's interests."

"But Dougall is not insane," persisted Arthur.

"Alston would claim he is, and people would believe him, and they would regard my motives in appearing in the case as very suspicious and selfish and strange. No, Arthur, it is a serious affair. We know that Mr. Dougall is a wronged man, but his enemies are powerful and unscrupulous, and when we get the treasure—"

"If we do get it," smiled Arthur.

"Yes—if we do it will make the future more difficult to estimate than the present."

"What is your plan, Frank?"

"To remove it to some new hiding-place nearer Brookville, then to rescue Mr. Dougall from the insane asylum,

give him the gold, and aid him to fly to a place of obscurity and safety."

Frank's boyish enthusiasm and devotion to a fellow being in distress completely won Arthur's confidence.

"I will cooperate with you in any plan you wish to carry out," he said earnestly. "If the treasure is found, do as you think best, and, either to cover your escape if Alston troubles us again, or to help you in any way, rely on the Brookville Boys' Club to be your friends."

Frank thanked his ingenuous, noble-minded friend heartily. Then he informed him in detail of the contents of the Dougall paper. Its directions, to Arthur, seemed sufficiently explicit, and he had already noticed various landmarks mentioned in the document.

"You see," said Frank, "so far every bend in the river or ravine we have passed corresponds with the paper. We must be near the spot where the boat sunk. In the morning we will proceed more slowly, and before night I doubt not will locate the exact spot where the Indians attacked the pioneers and the boat went down with its treasure."

That was a restless, anxious night for Frank. He had become thoroughly imbued with the adventurous spirit of an explorer in his quest, and never for a moment allowed the thought of failure to worry or discourage him. With the morning Arthur and he were on the tramp.

They had told the boys to remain at their temporary camp until they returned, and together set out on their journey.

"The north fork bends to the east and passes a high line of bank rocks," read Frank from the Dougall document.

"Yes! yes!" cried Arthur excitedly. "There they are yonder."

"The river here is deeper. There is a rocky gateway to a portion of the stream, where high reeds reach inland and a shelving rock running into the sandy beach," continued Frank, reading again from the paper.

"Every detail is correct," spoke Arthur delightedly.

"Ten feet from the shelving rock, where the shallows begin to deepen, is the boat—drifted over by sand or exposed by the storms and lessening waters, there you will find the treasure."

To both boys the situation was a thrilling one.

It was like some fairy romance. Step by step they seemed to near the goal of their hopes.

"The shallows, the shelving rock," corroborated Arthur. "See! it must be here!"

He had leaped upon a vast shelf of stone half-immersed in the water.

"Hurrah!"

His voice was a wild cry of excitement.

Frank ran toward him, fully as excited as himself.

"What is it?" he asked.

"We have found it!"

"Found what?"

"The treasure. Dougall's claim was no delusion. Look!"

And with anxious eyes and longing heart Frank Marvin saw, a few feet away, protruding from the water, the half-submerged prow of a boat!

The little party of boys, of which Frank Marvin and Arthur Landon were the leaders, were so absorbed in their various pursuits and delighted with their progress that they thought little and knew less of the doings of the outside world, or even of the enemies who were separated from them by only a barrier of high stone walls.

The operations of the remnant of the Brookville Boys' Club, which had been left in charge of Barton Grey, were monotonous and uneventful after the startling disappearance of their captain and his companions, at least for that period of time which covered the journey of the voyagers down the cañon to the sunken boat. Not so the movements of the Alston party, however. At that hour when Frank and Arthur had made their startling discovery the



enemies they had sent on a false trail were engaged in a discussion which was most threatening to the interests of the young adventurers.

Unlike their young competitors for the possession and utilization of the Dougall secret, Alston and his allies had proceeded down the east fork of the river on foot.

The paper Alston had wrested from his captive, Frank Marvin, was almost an exact copy of the real clue to the sunken treasure, and with blind fidelity to a mistaken belief, Alston had followed its directions.

Not for a moment did he doubt but that he was on the track of the treasure, and that he had outwitted and anticipated the doughty champion of his mad relative's interests.

Thus it was that the same sunrise hour which had dawned so portentously for Frank Marvin had seen Alston and Rawson on a similar quest, directly opposite and over the range of hills that divided the valley of the Black River.

Their progress had not been a satisfactory one. Not a single landmark mentioned in the paper taken from Frank Marvin had been verified. They were completely at sea and discouraged. While Onaloka and the Brown boys loitered at the camp-fire, content to repose idly with sufficient to eat and little labor, the leaders of the enterprise were engaged in earnest, gloomy speculation on the river-bank near-by.

"It's strange!" remarked Alston. "We have certainly followed the directions of the paper."

"And no success?"

"None."

"Let me look at the paper."

Alston handed the paper to Rawson.

The latter studied it carefully, turned it over, started, and a peculiar look of intelligence came into his face.

He startled Alston with a savage cry of rage and chagrin.

"What is it?" asked the latter.

"We've been fooled!"

"Fooled?"

"Yes."

"About what?"

"About the treasure. This document isn't worth the paper it is written on."

"I don't understand you, Rawson."

"Well, then, that boy Marvin has been too shrewd for us. You see this paper?"

"Yes."

"It's written in pencil, like the note Dougall wrote Marvin."

"Well?"

"On the other side, as you didn't notice, the printed matter is scratched off with a pencil. Look at it. It's part of a circular-blank on one side. But it's been printed lately, and comes from a town a hundred miles away. Where did Dougall get the circular to write on? Besides, we supposed the clue to the treasure was written years ago and concealed all this time by Dougall. That paper isn't in Dougall's handwriting at all."

"What?"

"Compare it with the note you have."

"I never thought of that, Rawson," exclaimed Alston excitedly, as he did as suggested by his companion. "The writing ain't the same."

"Of course it ain't."

"And that boy, Marvin——"

"Wrote it himself to delude us, put it in his shoe, and has sent us on a false trail like the stupid dolts that we are!"

It would be impossible to describe the rage and chagrin of the two plotters at their discovery, as additional investigation verified their first suspicions.

Gloomily they realized that a mere boy had shrewdly deluded them, sent them sixty miles on a wild, vain quest, while he himself was probably now nearing the treasure

their carelessness had allowed to slip through their greedy hands.

"It's too bad!" cried Rawson.

"Yes, but it can't be helped. Come, man, rouse yourself! All is not lost yet. I can plausibly theorize what this young scoundrel has done."

"What is that?" asked Rawson helplessly.

"Gone down the other fork of the river, where the treasure is really located."

"But he has three days' start of us."

"Not if we act expeditiously."

"What do you mean?"

"He will not find the treasure all in a minute."

"Probably not."

"When he does he will try to get out of the valley."

"Of course," assented Rawson.

"What will he do? Return to the falls? No, for there is no outlet of escape in that direction. He will hasten to leave the valley by continuing north. Onaloka knows the country, the Brown boys also. Let us consult with them."

The two men hurried back to their camp.

"Onaloka," said Alston, "we have reason to believe that the boy Marvin has deceived us and has gone down the other cañon. How can we reach him?"

"Go back twenty leagues and up the valley after him."

"That's the longest way," chimed in Andy Brown.

"Is there a shorter one?"

"Two of 'em."

"What are they?"

"Go forty miles north."

"To the end of the valley?"

"Yes."

"And then?"

"Wait till he comes out, or go in the other branch after him."

"That's it!" cried Rawson excitedly. "We will be sure to catch him then."

Alston, too, seemed pleased with the prospect, but he said to Andy:

"You spoke of two plans."

"Yes."

"Is there another?"

"Yes, indeed, and a good one."

"What is that?"

Andy pointed up to the high cliffs far above.

"See there?" he asked.

"Yes."

"It's about a mile over those hills after you reach the top."

"But how do you reach the top?"

"Climb it."

"And then?"

"Drop over into the very ravine the boys are in."

Alston regarded the almost perpendicular cliffs dubiously.

"Can it be done?" he asked of Onaloka.

"If white man can climb, yes."

"Then let us try it."

## CHAPTER IX.

### FOUND AT LAST.

For some moments after discovering the sunken boat Frank Marvin and Arthur Landon stood mutely regarding this satisfactory evidence of the reliability of mad James Dougall's claims.

It certainly looked as if no insane man could have written out so elaborate and accurate a guide-route to the spot from memory and after the lapse of years.

This was the boat, or, at least, its prow, and a glance showed Frank that it lay so near the shore that it would not be difficult to fathom its resting-place.



"There is no use of secrecy from the boys any longer," said Frank. "We cannot do without their help. Call them here, Arthur."

"You are going to begin work at once?"

"Without a moment's delay."

"And you expect to unearth the whole of the boat?"

"Certainly."

"Without tools?"

"Yes."

"Then you're a genius if you do."

Frank smiled pleasantly.

"I'm a common-sense mechanic," he said, "and fortune favors me in the matter of the boat. The channel of the river has changed since the boat sunk, as you can see, and it's more trouble with the sand than the water. Call the boys."

Arthur hurried off to the camp to carry out Frank's request, and the latter stood with studious, earnest face calculating his chances of digging out the treasure-boat.

He made a brief speech to the boys when they returned with Arthur.

"Boys," he said frankly, "as you have all suspected and partly known, I came here to try and find some property belonging to a poor, persecuted man who is unjustly shut up in an insane asylum. I have done this with no particular hope of reward, and I am not authorized to offer you any recompense for aiding me. The property I speak of lies under the sand in the boat of which you see the exposed prow. I believe that one day's work will dig it out. I have no claim on your time, but if you feel like helping me—"

Such a yell of boyish acquiescence that greeted his proposal and interrupted him! Had he not been their friend—rescued their cannon, led them safely through the cañon, and communicated with their friends?

"Would they help him?" "Aye"—a thousand times aye! Hurrah for Frank Marvin! Just command them, and five enthusiastic faces pressed close to his own as he told them his plan.

The average boy delights in any feat of mechanism, and Frank fairly entranced his companions as he developed his ingenuity and practical knowledge of engineering.

First, he made a dozen shovels of scooped bark with stout handles, formed some heavy wood crowbars, and then ordered them to carry stones to the edge of the shelving rock. Within an hour a semicircular caisson or dam was formed, surrounding what appeared to be the dimensions of the boat. This imprisoned the water in a circumscribed space. By digging a drain inland, and thence by a descent to the river again, he had quite a space clear, and what little water trickled past the dam Ernest was employed in scooping out.

They began to dig at the outer, or water, edge. As they proceeded, heavy wooden branches were added against the stone dam, and they bade fair to have a dry pit to dig in as they progressed with their work.

They delved like beavers, and their active, earnest work soon began to tell. Timber by timber the clumsy river-craft, which years since had gone down amid hostile savage warfare, was revealed in outline and bulk.

Noon found the boat denuded of sand. An hour later a great, eager shout echoed on the still air of the valley.

They had uncovered the raftlike deck of the sunken boat. More, they had revealed a large hatchway. Beyond it—Frank Marvin trembled with suspense at the thought—lay the treasure James Dougall had lost and dreamed of through long, weary years of irksome imprisonment and solitude.

The cracks of the hatchway, filled with dirt, crusted with sand, and swelled and hardened by the effects of time and exposure, were barely discernible. It took their united strength to force the cover out of place. A joyous, merry shout rang out as they fell back pell-mell in doing so.

Then every face became serious as they glanced apprehensively down into the hold of the boat.

"Get me the lantern," ordered Frank, in a tone of voice that was tremulous with suppressed excitement and anxiety.

Arthur did so. It was lighted and handed to Frank. His face was slightly pale. The uncertainty of his enterprise, and yet its importance, oppressed him tremendously. The others scarcely ventured to peer past him as he dropped into the hold, as if they feared to see some lurking Indian of the long ago, or the grinning skeleton of some of their ill-fated victims of the direful massacre of Black River Valley.

Frank Marvin's feet touched sand as he disappeared in the hold. This somewhat surprised him. A cursory view, however, showed that the forward part of the boat had either been broken in or had rotted away and had admitted the sand. The rays of the lantern fell first upon a small round object.

"A keg!" murmured Frank tumultuously. "Can it contain the treasure?"

He seized it eagerly. It was quite heavy. It might contain gold-dust or even coin, for he could hardly lift it alone.

Frank called to Arthur, and directed him to obtain and lower a piece of wild grape-vine. This was done, attached to the keg, and it was lifted to the surface.

The boys crowded around and viewed the sand-crusted object curiously.

"Is that it?" asked Arthur eagerly.

"The treasure?"

"Yes."

"I do not know. It is the only parcel in sight. It must be it."

"What shall we do with it?"

"Take it to the camp."

"And return?"

"Yes."

Willing hands bore the keg away. Frank watched them as they disappeared. He was very thoughtful now. The strange appearance of sand in the hold perplexed him. The quest must be continued, for the keg might not contain the treasure at all.

"I wish I had opened it," he murmured. "I will make a second visit to the hold, return to the camp, and do so."

About to again descend into the hold, he looked up in some surprise.

With an alarmed shout Arthur Landon was rushing hastily toward him.

His face was white and dismayed, and he waved his arms frantically.

"What has happened?" asked Frank in amazement.

"Oh, Frank!" ejaculated the breathless Arthur.

"Well, well, what is it?"

"Our enemies—Alston, Onaloka, the Brown boys!"

Frank sprang to the shore in deep concern.

"What of them?" he asked excitedly.

"They are descending the cliffs, have discovered our camp, and are hurrying toward it."

With a cry of dismay and alarm Frank Marvin dashed off toward the camp, whither the mysterious keg had just been conveyed, intent only on secreting it from his rapacious enemies.

The announcement of Arthur Landon was one calculated to fill Frank Marvin with emotions of the deepest alarm, and his glance was eager and anxious as he rounded a point of rocks and came within full view of the camp and the far-reaching valley beyond.

A sense of fear and dismay oppressed his mind as he glanced upward.

The plan of the venturesome Brown boys suggested to Alston a few hours previous on the other side of the valley had been carried into execution, and had succeeded.

With difficulty the five members of the party had scaled



the apparently inaccessible cliff, had reached the summit of the range, and were now rapidly descending its rocky reverse side.

By some strange destiny they had come to within half a mile of the camp of the boys, and their actions showed that they had discovered them.

There was no doubt of it. Within a brief time their enemies would be among them, and, too, at a most unpropitious moment, when a few steps would bring them to the sunken boat.

Frank's first impulse was to hurry back to the boat and endeavor to let in the water and sand and submerge it.

This, however, would consume time, and they would doubtless be discovered ere they could complete their work.

Apparently, too, the keg was the only article contained in the hold of the boat. For all they knew, it might represent thousands of dollars in treasure.

To secrete it was the first and foremost thought now.

"They are coming here," said Rob Graham.

"Yes," replied Frank. "Now, boys, we must be brave and defiant. This keg may contain all the fortune of the man those people are trying to rob."

"Hide it!" exclaimed a chorus of voices.

"Where?"

A dozen places were suggested, but in turn abandoned as not feasible or safe by Frank.

"No," he said thoughtfully. "We must not conceal it where a careless search will find it. When these men discover the boat, they will know that we have taken the treasure out of it, and will ransack the neighborhood for it. Ah! I have an idea. Quick, Ernest, scoop a hole for a fire."

Ernest looked in mystified surprise at Frank, but obeyed him.

"Now, then, some wood, and build a fire before those men reach us."

Frank had placed the keg in the hole that Ernest had excavated. Over it he put some ashes and then some wood.

"Keep the fire going," he said. "Alston and the others will never dream of looking for the keg under a camp-fire."

It seemed a brilliant idea, and his anxiety concerning the keg was relieved, and, confident that it would escape discovery, he formulated a progressive plan of action.

"Now, then, boys," he said rapidly, "it will probably be fifteen minutes or half an hour before our enemies arrive here. When they do come, you all be seated around the fire as coolly as though nothing had happened."

"And you?" asked Arthur curiously.

"You and I will return to the boat. We will make a hasty search for further articles. They cannot see us for intervening rocks. Let you boys do all you can to delay them, and give us as much time to explore the sunken boat as is possible."

"But when they do discover the boat?" asked Ernest.

"We will have removed and concealed any further articles we may find. If there are none, we have in that keg what we have been and what they are looking for. Come, Arthur."

The two boys hurried back to the boat. Frank told Arthur to ascend the ledges, so as to command a view of the river, and warn him when Alston's party came that way.

Then, taking the lantern, he again descended into the hold of the sunken boat.

This time, being more accustomed to its gloomy, confined interior, he was enabled to make a more comprehensive and intelligent search.

He was engrossed and amazed as it proceeded. He made an examination of the forward portion of the boat, and was startled at a discovery that thrilled him to quick disappointment and dismay.

He found positive evidences of the fact that the side of

the boat had been broken in, and that, too, quite recently, for the timbers were fresh and new where parted. He discovered definite proof that some one had visited the hold and had dug sidewise from the bank. This had let in the dirt and sand. Removing some of it, he saw the marks where a square box had recently rested and a score of tiny brilliant particles—gold-dust!

Had he come too late? Had some one anticipated him? Evidently. Then what did the keg contain? Something valueless, surely, for it had been in plain sight. Else why had it, too, not been removed?

A dreadful fear made him sick at heart as he realized that the treasure must be gone. He was about to ascend when his foot touched an object imbedded in the sand.

It was a keg, or, rather, the ruins of one. Precisely like the other, it showed where some one, perhaps the mysterious, unknown visitor, had satisfied himself of its contents by breaking it open.

Horror!

Every vestige of color left Frank Marvin's face, his heart stood still, his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, his brain reeled.

A mass of deadly black grains poured from the keg. Powder!

And its companion was buried under the fire at the boys' camp, the cinders momentarily burning their fatal way down to the dreadful powder.

And seated around it, all unconscious of the awful danger that menaced them, were the five boys whom Frank Marvin had innocently condemned to a sudden and terrible death unless they were at once warned of their peril!

## CHAPTER X.

### THE EXPLOSION.

Doughtier hearts than that of Frank Marvin would have quailed at the terrible situation of affairs that confronted the young adventurer at that moment.

He knew that a spark eating its slow, certain way to the deadly powder would ignite the mass and cause an explosion that would blow his devoted friends and companions to atoms.

Was he too late? Could he reach the camp in time to warn and save them? Could it be possible that the keg might not contain powder?

No! no! Even amid the exuberance of his first discovery he had remarked the comparative lightness of the keg. In an agony of suspense he clambered to the deck.

Twenty feet above, on a narrow ledge, Arthur Landon stood watching the river, all unconscious of the peril that menaced his companions.

"Arthur—Arthur—the boys—powder—danger—death!"

In half-articulate gasps Frank uttered the words. At that moment, too, he staggered.

A deafening explosion had rent the air—a dense volume of light, steamy smoke showed around the point of rocks near the camping-place.

With a horrified groan the unhappy boy sank to the ground and buried his face in his hands.

In direful imagination he saw his companions maimed, mutilated, killed. For a moment a wave of awful responsibility and condemnation utterly prostrated him.

"Frank! Frank!"

Oh! could it be possible—the voices of his companions? Had some, then, escaped? But only to narrate the heart-rending fate of their companions?

He struggled to his feet. He could scarcely believe the evidence of his vision. Five boys, Ernest, Abner, Morton, Dick, and Rob Graham were rushing toward him.

"Safe! escaped!" almost screamed poor Frank. "Oh! thank Heaven! Thank Heaven!"



He scarcely heard their words, confused and excited, as they crowded around him. In silent, earnest gratitude his soul was far from earth in devout, thankful prayer to the Supreme Being whose mercy seemed to have intervened in the darkest misery his heart had ever known.

"The men—Alston and the others——" began Ernest excitedly.

"They drove us away," chimed in Dick.

"And something has happened," cried Rob excitedly.

With gradual coherency they related their adventures to Frank.

Alston and his companions had descended into the ravine, and, as Frank had expected, had come straight to the camp-fire shortly after his departure for the boat.

"Ah!" cried Alston triumphantly, "we've found you again, have we?"

"It seems so," replied Rob Graham boldly.

"Where's your pals?" demanded Alston coarsely.

"We don't have pals," replied Rob aggressively.

"Oh! you don't, eh? You're very fine-lined, you are! Pals is a good enough name for us."

"It ought to be, seeing the company you keep," replied the irrepressible Rob, with a significant glance at the Browns.

Andy and Mark glared vengefully at their former friend, but were silent.

"Your friends, then—Marvin and the other fellow?"

"Oh, they'll be here soon," answered Rob coolly.

Alston surveyed his mute companions seated quietly about the fire. It looked suspicious.

"You seem to keep a pretty hot fire," he remarked.

"There's plenty of wood," imperturbably responded Rob, who acted as spokesman of the party.

"What's this?"

The boys never moved, but exchanged dismayed glances as Rawson kicked at the fire.

The wood burning away had revealed the iron hoop of the keg.

"That's the secret of their fire. They're hiding a keg there. See, Alston!"

"May be the treasure! Out of this, you young villains!" cried Alston excitedly.

There was nothing for it but retreat. Rob and the others made up their minds that further evasion or defense of their trust was futile, and they made a rush to warn Frank and Arthur.

They had scarcely rounded the point of rocks when the explosion came.

Every face blanched as Frank related the peril they had so providentially escaped.

"Arthur, come down!" he called up the hillside.

Arthur Landon started toward them.

The boys watched him, intent on being the first to tell what had occurred.

A simultaneous cry of wonder, doubt, and alarm escaped them as they looked.

Of a sudden they saw their companion drop from sight.

Not falling, but gliding into the ground before their amazed vision, Arthur Landon disappeared as suddenly and mysteriously as though the earth had opened and swallowed him up.

If ever the evil pursuers of the friends of poor James Dougall, their persecuted victim, had a narrow escape from death, it was when the keg of powder exploded.

When Rob Graham and his companions fled the camp at Alston's mandate, the latter at once directed his attention to the keg under the fire.

His sinister eyes showed all his avaricious nature, and he watched Rawson breathlessly as the latter kicked the fire away and eagerly strove to lift the keg from its resting-place.

Its top was a mass of charred, sparkling cinders, and, as

Rawson gingerly lifted the heated article, the breeze fanned these to a slight flame.

"It ain't the treasure. Drop it!" howled Alston, in appalled horror.

He had read the word where the band was burned off—in great, glaring letters—powder!

In wild alarm Rawson dropped the keg. It rolled toward the river, and then——

An awful explosion followed that flung every member of the party to the ground and tore up the earth for yards around.

In craven fear, with ashen faces, Alston and Rawson struggled to their feet.

The latter's hand was singed and burned and raw. Andy Brown's face was fairly tattooed with powder. Aside from this they had escaped luckily.

"It was all a plot!" groaned Rawson, nursing his smarting, lacerated hand. "The young assassins! They saw us coming and prepared for us."

"The desperate villains!" ejaculated Alston. "But where would they get a keg of powder?"

"Maybe in the sunken boat. They've found the treasure, and tried to kill us so we wouldn't take it away from them."

"Then let us get after them," cried Alston. "Come, no whining there, Master Andy. Be thankful you ain't killed by these murderous young desperadoes!"

Thus it was that in the midst of utter wonderment over the mysterious disappearance of Arthur Landon, and before they could investigate its cause, Frank and his companions saw their enemies coming toward them.

He was not sorry that they had escaped, and the discovery of the sunken boat had been attended by so many bewildering complications that he was not inclined to battle circumstances, but placidly awaited the arrival of his enemies.

Ernest and all the others but Rob shrank back as they saw the red, angry face of Alston.

The latter advanced straight to where Frank stood, and shook his big, burly fist in his face.

"You—you young murderer!" he growled. "You tried to kill us."

"In what way?"

"In what way? Well, you know. It's attempted murder—wholesale slaughter, and I'll make you pay for it."

"What did you run into danger for, then?" responded Frank coolly. "We never knew what the keg contained until I visited the boat——"

"What boat?" demanded Alston.

Then, quick as a flash, he turned as Rawson pointed to the sunken craft.

"They've found it!" yelled Rawson, wildly excited, "and they've been into it, for here's a lantern."

"Go and see what is in it," ordered Alston.

Rawson disappeared in the hold with the lantern. His face was blank as he returned a moment later.

"What have you found?" asked Alston eagerly.

"Nothing."

"Nothing!" echoed Alston disappointedly.

"Nothing but sand and a broken keg of powder."

"Then the treasure has been removed. Boy!" cried Alston fiercely, seizing Frank's arm in a viselike grasp, "what have you done with it?"

"Done with what?"

"The treasure."

"I have seen no treasure."

"It's a falsehood."

Frank drew himself up proudly.

"Mr. Alston," he said, "I never tell a lie."

"Oh, you don't?" sneered Alston malignantly. "It wasn't a lie to send us on a wrong trail?"

"No."

"Your letter wasn't a lie?"



"No. You took it for granted it was true. If you hadn't stolen it you wouldn't have gone on any false trail."

Frank's coolness exasperated Alston wildly.

"Nothing but sand and a broken keg of powder."

"You needn't tell me. You have taken something from the hold of that boat."

"Yes, a keg of powder. Nothing more."

It was evident that Alston did not believe Frank Marvin. He was so false himself that, despite Frank's truthful character, he believed he was deceiving him.

"Hold this boy," he said to Rawson.

Alston transferred Frank's guardianship to his companion as he spoke.

"Now, then," said Alston to the others, "you get out of here."

Rob Graham looked defiant, but at a look from Frank led the way from the place.

"You had better get home as fast as you can," spoke Alston. "This boy stays with us. If any of you come spying around here again, I'll set the Brown boys on you and give you a drubbing."

"Ha! ha! Send them here now," yelled Rob derisively. "Come on, you sneaking cowards. Give us fair play and we'll see who will get the drubbing."

But the Brown boys were in no brave mood, and Rob and the others departed unmolested.

"Tie Marvin's hands, and you, Andy, watch him," ordered Alston, and Frank found himself again a prisoner.

Alston and Rawson dug and delved and explored in the hold of the sunken boat until dark.

Their faces expressed the keenest chagrin and disappointment as they completed their investigations.

They had found absolutely nothing of value to reward their laborious and exhaustive search.

"That boy Marvin has got ahead of us," remarked Alston angrily.

"It looks so," responded Rawson.

"I'll try and make him tell. Here, Marvin, what have you done with the treasure?"

"I told you once I hadn't seen it."

"Well, I know you have. Now, then, if you reveal it I will divide with you."

"What! Divide another man's property?"

Alston winced.

"If you don't I'll take you to Elmvile and jail you."

"All right."

"Keep him a prisoner for a day or two, and he'll be less defiant," said Rawson.

Frank's hands were tied behind him, and he was placed against a tree.

Andy and Mark Brown were ordered to watch him by turns, as Alston feared that some of his friends might attempt a rescue.

Onaloka was sent out to try and locate Arthur and his party, as Alston thought they might have a knowledge of the secreted treasure.

The half-breed returned late in the evening, however, with the information that nowhere could he find a trace of the boys.

They had disappeared suddenly, mysteriously, effectively, although their raft was still down the river.

Frank's heart sank as he heard this, believing that his friends had deserted him, but a little later he knew that this was not so.

It was long after midnight when Alston and Rawson went to sleep by the camp-fire.

The Brown boys were ordered to stay awake and guard their captive, and Onaloka was stationed a little distance away to prevent a surprise from Frank's friends, whom Alston feared, boys as they were, for he knew their shrewdness and courage.

Frank could not sleep in his uncomfortable position, and worried as he was at the unexpected complication in affairs. The Brown boys nodded dreamily. It was just as dawn was breaking, and perfect quiet was down over the camp, that Frank was startled as a branch fell from the tree.

A moment later a shower of leaves descended. He looked up. Imagining a dark, descending form he saw to be some lurking beast of prey, he was about to give an alarm, when a familiar voice spoke his name in low, impressive accents: "Frank!"

The figure cautiously descended the tree, reached its lower branches and then the ground, and crept noiselessly behind Frank and severed his bonds with a knife.

It was Arthur Landon. He kept his eye fixed on the slumbering Alston and Rawson and the sleepy, nodding Brown boys.

"Follow me!" he whispered, and then, about to lead the way to the hillside, he paused dismayed.

A horrible yell from down the valley rang out, shrill and echoing.

A dusky form came running toward the camp.

"Onaloka! and he has discovered us!" cried Frank. "What shall we do?"

And as the sleeping camp was aroused at Onaloka's warning cry, Arthur said excitedly:

"Climb the tree! It is our only way of escape!"

As Arthur Landon sprang up the tree and Frank Marvin followed him, the half-breed, Onaloka, reached the camp.

Alston had gained his feet. One look showed their captive gone.

"The boy!" he cried, in alarm.

## CHAPTER XI.

### A STRANGE DISCOVERY.

Onaloka pointed up the tree.

"There!" he said, with his usual brusque taciturnity.

They shook the tree, and the half-breed ascended its branches. They scoured the hillside. Not a trace of the missing captive nor his rescuer was to be found.

In bewildered amazement they searched the hillside, the neighboring trees, the riverside. Then, theorizing that the boys must have escaped down the stream, Alston's party divided and set out to hunt for Frank.

If they were mystified at the strange disappearance of their captive, Frank Marvin was fairly astounded at the facility and strangeness of his escape.

Arthur ascended the tree half-way, swung from its branches to a ledge of rocks, and, followed by Frank, ran along it a little way, pulled aside some heavy vines, and, revealing a dark aperture, glided into it.

Frank darted in after him. Arthur delayed farther progress with a low, warning word. Pulling the vines back into place, he and his startled companion watched the operations of their enemies by the glare of the firelight.

"They do not suspect where we have gone, and are searching the river-bank," said Arthur finally. "Come—we are safe."

"Come where?" asked the perplexed Frank.

"Follow me and see."

The aperture seemed to lead transversely down a passage-way high enough for them to walk through. A minute later the two boys emerged from darkness into the faint, dawning light of day.

An exclamation of the profoundest surprise and delight escaped Frank Marvin's lips. The aperture had terminated in a little sheltered valley, small in extent and so shut in by towering cliffs that an accidental discovery of its strange means of entrance or a view from above would alone reveal its existence.



Near a rock some little distance away, slumbering serenely, were Rob, Ernest, Dick, Morton, and Abner. He could scarcely believe his eyes. In deep bewilderment he stared at Arthur.

"What does this mean?" he asked blankly.

"A safe retreat from our enemies, as you see," was Arthur's smiling response.

"But—"

"Yes, I know you are mystified. So were the others when I brought them here. So was I when I stumbled upon this exquisite little spot."

"When was that?"

"When you called me yesterday afternoon to come down to the boat, you know I was on guard and ran to come down to you?"

"Yes. We saw you disappear."

"Well, I fell through that vine-covered aperture and rolled its length. I saw the situation and beauty of the place and then returned. Alston and his men had captured you. I watched them and discerned that it was useless to reveal myself. I watched all their movements. After dark I crept out and found the boys and managed to get them here unobserved. Then I watched you. I have waited all night until your guards were asleep to rescue you. Now we are safe."

Frank thrilled to grateful acknowledgment of Arthur's unselfish devotion.

"And this is the only entrance to this little valley?" he asked.

"Apparently."

"It looks like the haunt of some old hermit."

"It is."

"What?" cried Frank.

"Yes; or, rather, was. This valley has been inhabited. We are not its first discoverers."

"How do you know that?"

"Because near that little clump of trees yonder is a house."

"A house?"

"Yes; or, rather, a home. The rocks form a cavern. It bears evidences of recent occupancy. We did nothing more than merely visit it. It was too dark to investigate, but to-day we will do so thoroughly."

Frank was startled. If the valley had a denizen, the wild thought came to his mind, might not he be the person who had apparently anticipated them by rifling the sunken treasure-boat?

An hour later the entire party were awake. It seemed safe to build a fire, as the smoke would dissipate into vapor before it could possibly reach the top of the cliffs, and thus fail to betray their hiding-place to their enemies in the cañon without.

The little valley abounded in small birds and game, berries, larger fruits, and a spring of sparkling water, and they did not fear starvation or thirst.

After breakfast Frank and Arthur went to the little thicket the latter had alluded to.

Frank was deeply interested as they examined the place. It certainly held a cavern, and this bore signs of long occupancy. The skins of animals, a fireplace, rude log furniture, and numerous minor articles were scattered about the cave.

Everything looked as if the cavern had been used as a home quite recently. It was quite dark, and Frank suggested that they secure some torches to illuminate the place and make a more thorough investigation, the lantern having been left at the boat.

"Some one has certainly lived here," he said thoughtfully, as they came out of the cave. "Why, what is this?"

He had picked up a strangely twisted piece of wire. It was bent in a circle, and across it ran a straight bar of iron.

In the center of this was a piece of burned and blackened material resembling a sponge.

Examining it curiously, he started at a sudden cry from Arthur.

"Oh! Frank! it can't be!" he cried excitedly.

"What?"

"That wire."

"You know what it is?"

"I do. The wire hoop of a balloon. Frank, I made it myself at Brookville less than two weeks ago. That is the hoop and alcohol sponge we used to send up the balloon of the Brookville Boys' Club."

The discovery was a startling one. Only as a theme for wonderment did it occupy the minds of the two boys, however, though they little dreamed what an important element it was to prove in their progress.

"Ain't it strange!" cried Arthur. "Just think of it! A balloon made of newspapers conveyed by ordinary gas to float this far. Why, Frank, it must have traveled over a hundred miles!"

"And fell here," murmured Frank wonderingly. "The balloon must have been consumed by fire, for there is no paper about."

They discussed the incident excitedly, gathered some dry pitch-knots, and returned to the cave.

Illuminated, its interior showed more plainly. Whoever had lived there was evidently a hunter, for they found an old rusty musket and numerous traps and skins of animals.

"Look here, Frank!"

Arthur held his torch near a wall of the cavern. Upon its surface was pasted two small pieces of paper.

They seemed to be fresh and clear, and looked as if they had been recently placed there.

Arthur perused them interestedly.

"Why, Frank!" he exclaimed, "here is a new discovery!"

"How so?"

"These articles have been cut from a paper printed at Riverton."

"Oh, yes. A town near Brookville where I stopped."

"Yes. And what is more singular, they have been cut from the balloon."

"Impossible!"

"I am sure of it. We used a late Riverton newspaper to make it. I remember it distinctly, and the balloon descended here, and the person who lived here found it, read the paper, probably the first one he had seen for years, and cut these articles from it. Marvel on marvel, one of the items refers to you!"

"Arthur, you're joking!"

"I am not. Listen!"

Frank Marvin thought he was in a dream as Arthur Landon began to read.

The first item ran:

"Enterprise and independence exhibited in boys show where our great men come from. A young lad named Frank Marvin, a genius of a mechanic, tramped through Riverton yesterday. The brave boy is on his way East, to go to school with money he earned in the West. He is an orphan and friendless, but has ambition and energy, and, with a little kit of tinker's tools, is working his way eastward, so as to get home in time for school, where he pays for his own tuition with his honestly earned dollars. He amazed Riverton at his knack of mending broken gates, old locks, cracked windows, and sharpening tools. All success to the valiant hero! He will be a senator some day."

From sheer surprise Frank Marvin could not speak, as for the first time he knew that some admiring country editor had given him a free advertisement.

The second scrap from the paper was brief, and it read:

"Mr. Robert Alston and Mr. Rawson were in Riverton yesterday on a search for a dangerous escaped lunatic,



James Dougall. Our unfortunate townsman is at large, and our people should aid Mr. Alston in returning him to the asylum, as his malady is an incurable one."

"There, Frank, what do you think of that?" demanded Arthur.

What did he think of it? He could not analyze his thoughts for some moments. It was not the publication of the news that mystified him. That was quite natural. Even the paper containing them floating here was easily explained and comprehended.

Why had the late inmate of the cave selected these two items bearing a positive relation to each other and preserved them?

That was what mystified Frank Marvin.

Who was the mysterious resident of the secluded valley to whom a messenger from the outside world, the balloon newspaper, had brought an interest in him, obscure, unknown Frank Marvin, Alston Rawson, and James Dougall?

The thought perplexed him—its later elucidation was to reveal to him a marvelous mystery.

Lost in meditation, he was startled from his reverie as their investigation proceeded.

In one corner of the cave they came upon a broken chest. It was covered with sand. In its bottom lay some rotted canvas bags. Around it shining particles of gold-dust showed.

A quick intelligence came into Frank Marvin's face. A deep suspicion was verified.

Some one had anticipated them in securing the treasure—he knew that already.

That it was the former occupant of the cave he now also knew.

For the chest was undoubtedly the one that had lain in the hold of the sunken treasure-boat.

The startling and accumulating surprises of the hour completely overcame Frank Marvin. He sank to a seat and sat staring wonderingly at the chest, at the scraps of paper on the wall, and then at his companion.

Arthur, too, was greatly excited and impressed with the importance of their discoveries.

"Well, Frank," he said finally, "what do you think of all this?"

"A most bewildering complication!" replied Frank seriously. "I can't understand it at all."

"Nor I. There's one thing sure; some one lived here."

"Evidently."

"He found the balloon and had some strange interest in those two newspaper items."

"It looks so, Arthur."

"Why he did so, or who he is, we don't know. He may return and explain, however."

"I think not."

"Why so?"

"Because I have a theory why he should not do it."

"What is that?"

"He is the man who found the treasure."

"It looks like it."

"Oh, it is so! There is certainly the treasure-chest. He probably discovered it by accident, and that, too, very lately."

"Well?"

"He was surprised to find the gold. He brought it here. It was treasure-trove and rightfully his own. He was suddenly rich. He packed it up in new parcels and is now on his way to civilization."

"Well, Frank, if that is true, you have had all your trouble for nothing."

"No."

"The quest ends here, and Mr. Dougall loses his money."

"No."

Frank's face was very determined as he spoke.

"You don't know the man."

"I shall find him."

"Find an utter stranger to yourself and everybody else?"

"I shall try to. More difficult tasks have been done. He has not been gone long nor far. I shall find him. Poor Mr. Dougall shall not lose his money!"

"Suppose you did find him?"

"I would try to recover the money. I promised Dougall to aid him, and I will do my best to keep my pledge."

There was a dauntless fervency in the brave lad's resolution. Arthur, while believing the case hopeless, could not but admire his pluck and perseverance.

"Then you intend to leave here soon?" asked Arthur, after a pause.

"Yes; as soon as we can safely evade Alston and his friends."

Even at that moment a wild plan to rescue Dougall, and later to seek a trace of the possessor of the treasure, floated confidently through Frank's ready mind.

"The man who lived here amused himself by writing, it seems," remarked Arthur, as they were about to leave the place.

He alluded to the rear smooth wall of the cavern, which was marked here and there with pieces of chalky rock.

Frank went nearer to the wall. A close inspection rewarded his vigilance.

Carelessly scrawled were a lot of figures. Thus one set ran:

"Coin—\$1,200.

Gold-dust—92 pounds."

Frank's eye brightened. He doubted not but that this record constituted an estimate of the former contents of the treasure-chest. Its large value amazed him.

"The man had a heavy load if he carried away all that," he said.

"I guess he did carry it away," replied Arthur. "Look here, Frank—here's a tangible clue to the intentions of our mysterious friend."

Upon another portion of the wall Arthur had discovered a lot of writing. A rough map seemed to have been drawn from memory, changed, obliterated, and redrawn.

It marked Riverton as the starting-place, and here, under it, was the memorandum:

"Ship parcels to John Smith, St. Louis."

The name "Smith" was blurred, as if the writer had changed it several times, and was probably an assumed or fictitious one.

Then there were dots, showing the principal cities on a line of railroad to the Mississippi River.

Under them was written:

"At each place inquire and telegraph ahead for the boy. If not to be traced, go from St. Louis to his home and wait for him."

"Why, Frank!" cried Arthur, after reading the extraordinary record, "this man means you."

"It looks so," replied the mystified Frank.

"For some strange reason he wishes to find you. What can it be?"

Poor Frank was perplexedly silent. Who was "John Smith"? Why did he wish to find "the boy," undoubtedly himself?

"I am involved in a deep mystery, that is certain," he said, as they walked back to the camp. "It determines me more than ever to pursue this man. I must hasten to Riverton to find him."

"And we will not detain you," said Arthur. "We are all anxious to get home."

"Then we will leave at once."

They did not impart their discoveries to their companions, but informed them of their meditated attempt to leave the valley that night.



A reconnaissance from the hillside aperture revealed Alston's party still in the vicinity, evidently loath to leave the place where they believed the treasure must be hidden away.

"Wait till dark," suggested Frank, and this they decided to do.

For himself, he was thoughtful and serious over his future plans all that day. The others rambled the valley, but late in the afternoon returned to the camp, in readiness for the night journey.

Ernest watched the cañon, and, waiting for night and anxious to keep up the spirits of his companions, Frank indulged in one of his greatest accomplishments—story-telling.

His own adventurous life furnished many a theme for interesting narration, and his experience in the wild West held his auditors spellbound. This he supplemented with the recital of a perilous voyage on Lake Erie, where he himself aided the man at the wheel in a terrible storm, and he had just concluded, when Ernest returned from his point of observation to report that Alston and his friends had again camped for the night near the sunken treasure-boat.

Frank and Arthur visited the aperture and watched the movements of their enemies as night fell.

"We can escape down the cañon in the darkness," said Arthur, "but we will have to make the journey on foot."

"Where is the raft?" asked Frank.

"Beyond the point of rocks, but we could not pass Alston without being discovered, for their camp is directly on the river."

"I have a plan," said Frank speculatively.

"What is that?"

"To cut the raft loose and take the risk of their seeing it float by."

"They might discover you."

"No—I can traverse this ledge far beyond the camp, and return undiscovered."

This plan was executed, and Frank made the trip in safety.

They saw the raft float past the camp. None of its occupants noticed it.

One hour later the boys stole from the valley, reached the cañon, passed far to the north of Alston and his friends, and before midnight caught up with the raft, and were being borne rapidly from the Black River district, where they had met with such startling adventures.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE RESCUE.

"Hurrah!"

The shout of joy, surprise, and enthusiasm that rang out on the clear morning air was repeated by a score of delighted boys exactly one week after the escape of Frank and his friends from Alston's party, and the place of its excited echoing was the same camp of the Brookville Boys' Club that they had left so strangely on the night of its first location.

Through perils of water and land, dangerous mountain-

path and lonely prairie, under the skilful guidance of the intrepid Frank Marvin, the adventurers of the far-famed Black River Cañon had made the momentous journey ventured by so few in the past, and, bronzed, hearty, and in high spirits, had returned safe and sound to the camp.

They were heroes, every one of them, in the eyes of their less fortunate companions, who saw a gloomy contrast in their monotonous camp-life to the thrilling adventures of the valley voyagers.

Acting Captain Barton Grey had not preserved a very commendable discipline in the camp, and the boys had not had a pleasant time, they said. Now that their companions had returned, however, all was excitement and delight.

Arthur Landon's first question was for their friends at Brookville. Barton said that he had not informed them of their going to the cañon until after he had received the kite message.

Then he had gone personally to Brookville. At first the families of the beleaguered boys were terribly alarmed, and there was talk of a rescue-party starting out. The academy professor, however, assured them that the real apprehension of peril was passed in the safe voyage over the falls, and that the boys would probably return safely in a week.

There was quite a long confab over the situation. Then it was decided to prolong the encampment for another week, only Arthur insisted that he hasten to Brookville to report their safe return.

This was agreed on, and at noon he and Frank started for Elmville.

The next morning they left it in a conveyance. Twenty-four hours later, arrived in Brookville, Arthur Landon hastened to his home. His anxious mother stood at the gate, and she saw him coming. It was, indeed, the captain of the Brookville Boys' Club, and there was a joyous welcome, and, later, a hurried visit to the homes of his companions in exile, to assure their parents of their safety.

Frank had gone to the hotel, and there Arthur found him that afternoon.

"I am going to leave my kit of tools with you, Arthur," he said.

"You are going away?"

"In an hour."

"By stage?"

"Yes."

"To Riverton?"

Frank hesitated.

"Not at first," he said. "I am going to stop at the asylum. Arthur," he continued earnestly, "you may think me venturesome, but I fear for poor Mr. Dougall. I am determined to follow and find the man who has secured the treasure, but it may take weeks to do so. Meantime, Alston will return. He is rich and powerful. He may spirit Dougall away to some remote spot—they may even kill him, for they are wicked, desperate men. I have resolved to outwit them. I intend to rescue Mr. Dougall."

"From the asylum?" asked the startled Arthur.

"Yes."

"It will be a difficult task."

"Why so?"



"It is closely guarded and barred, and Dougall is probably strictly confined."

"I shall reach him. If I only knew where his room is, or something about the interior of the place."

Arthur looked thoughtful.

"Frank," he said suddenly, "I'll help you."

"You!"

"Yes. Now, don't try to dissuade me. You've been my friend. I will be yours this time and poor Dougall's. Wait till I come back."

Arthur went home, explained that he was going away for the night, and two hours later the boys set out on their journey in the stage-coach.

It was well on toward dusk when they reached the asylum.

It was a large, gloomy, rambling structure, and Arthur decided, as he was known, to pay it a visit.

Frank waited outside, and Arthur rejoined him an hour later.

"Well," asked Frank eagerly, "did you see him?"

"Mr. Dougall? No."

Frank looked disappointed.

"But he is there," continued Arthur. "I am satisfied he is confined in a room in the wing they do not show to visitors."

"Do you think you could locate it?"

"Yes."

It was now quite dark, and they were free to ramble about the place without fear of discovery.

Arthur indicated two heavily barred windows on the second floor as probably looking out from Dougall's place of imprisonment.

Frank Marvin had already decided on a plan of action, and had come prepared to put it into execution.

He reconnoitered the place carefully, stationed Arthur so as to warn him from interruption, and nimbly climbed a trellis leading up to the windows.

This served as a guard to the windows from outside observation, and admirably aided Frank in his designs, as it gave him a foothold to operate from.

He grasped the vine-covered trellis and peered in at the windows. The room was totally dark. He ventured to tap cautiously on the pane. Then he waited anxiously.

A moment later a pale, curious face was pressed closely against the window and peered out at him.

Frank Marvin thrilled to quick delight. It was Dougall. He was decided now. Taking a chisel from his pocket, he slightly pried up the window-sash.

"Mr. Dougall," he said, low and cautiously.

An excited ejaculation was his reply.

"Yes, yes. Who are you—a friend?"

"Yes—Frank Marvin. Be silent, cautious. I have come to rescue you."

"Thank Heaven!" came the broken, agitated response.

"Are we free from interruption?"

"Yes. The guards have made their last rounds."

Frank took a file and saw from his pocket. His mechanical knowledge never served a nobler purpose. He was giving liberty to a wronged, persecuted man, shut in to a living death for long, weary years.

Half an hour, one bar cut; one hour, two bars severed.

"Come!"

Trembling with apprehension, James Dougall crept through the window. Together they descended the trellis.

He was free! Standing there breathing in the pure air of heaven, a heart of gratitude showed in his hunted, suffering, tear-dimmed eyes.

"Good-by. I will soon return to Brookville," said Frank, hastily, to Arthur. "Do you regret the kindness you have done this persecuted man?"

"A thousand times no. Good-by, and God speed you to safety and success," replied Arthur fervently.

"God will bless you, my noble friend," supplemented Dougall reverentially.

Frank hurried him from the spot. He had calculated his chances of an escape, and had timed their operations accurately.

"We must reach Riverton by midnight," he said. "Are you able for the journey, Mr. Dougall?"

"Yes, yes," replied his companion eagerly. "Anything to escape the horrors of yonder living tomb."

As they proceeded, Frank told him all the marvelous story of his adventures. Its details were a shock to Dougall, but Frank assured him that they would yet recover the treasure.

It was fully eleven o'clock when they reached the outskirts of Riverton. Frank bade Dougall remain near the public square in the shadow of the trees until he returned.

"Where are you going?" asked Dougall.

"To the railroad-depot. I shall buy two tickets for Kansas City. We will board the train just as it is leaving the station, so that you run no risk of being seen and recognized."

Frank hastened to the station. He was intent on using his precious savings to aid a stranger, but he did so unselfishly. Human life and happiness were in his power to enhance, and he did not hesitate.

He purchased two tickets, after waiting for the agent for some time. His delay was not unimproved, however, and he made a new and important discovery.

Among other notices on the bulletin-board was one, the sight of which startled him.

It had evidently been recently printed, for it was dated two days previous. It read:

#### "REWARD.

#### "INFORMATION WANTED

Of a boy named Frank Marvin, traveling as a tinker. Address for five days, Main Depot, Kansas City; ten days, St. Louis. A liberal reward will be paid any person furnishing information of his whereabouts."

And the notice was signed "John Smith."

"I shall find him. I shall know this man's strange interest in me!" murmured Frank tumultuously, as he sped back to the public square.

A sudden dread oppressed him as he noticed that Dougall was not where he had left him. Instead, an official-looking man, evidently a night-watchman or constable, came toward him.

In the distance Frank heard the whistle of the approaching midnight express.



There was no time to lose if they would catch the train. He ventured to address the stranger.

"Have you seen an old gentleman near here?" he asked. The man laughed disagreeably.

"Tall, thin, and wearing torn clothes?" he asked.

"Yes."

"I just took him to the police-station, after a long chase," was the careless reply. "He's a lunatic—James Dougall—and he had just escaped from the insane asylum."

Frank Marvin thought it best not to let the man know of his friendship for James Dougall, or that he had had a hand in the prisoner's escape, for fear of being detained and punished.

He decided to go on alone to Kansas City and interview the mysterious "John Smith." Upon his arrival he hunted up the man who had posted the notice on the bulletin-board, and discovered that he was his own father!

"My story is a simple one," he said mournfully. "When you believed me dead I had wandered with some explorers far away from civilization. I was captured by a hostile tribe of Indians, and finally escaped. I met a man I believed to be a friend. We were working a mine together. I sent him to Kansas City to sell some gold-dust and telegraph about my family. He returned and reported that he had done so, and that my wife and son had both died a year previous."

William Marvin's eyes flashed ominously at memory of the false report. Then he continued:

"The intelligence completely prostrated me. I had found a fortune in gold-dust, but all my ambition departed when I knew of my affliction. I fell ill. One night my false-hearted partner left me for dead and stole all the gold. I recovered. There was no brightness in life for me. I tried to find my thieving partner, but failed. Then, my hopes blighted, my life a weary memory, I happened on the Black River Valley. Its solitude pleased me. There I have remained since."

"And the sunken treasure-boat?" asked Frank.

"I discovered the prow three weeks since. I dug down, more out of curiosity than anything else. I found the gold and removed it to the little cavern. The next day a paper balloon descended into the valley. I happened to read the newspaper of which it was made. Imagine my surprise and delight when I read that you were alive."

"And then?"

"Then, doubting, hoping, life held a new promise. I believed the gold unclaimed and rightfully my own. You know the rest. I shipped it to St. Louis ahead of me. My plan was to try and find you before you reached home. I supposed you had gone on from Riverton, never suspecting that fate would send you to the valley where I had resided for so many years. And now I have found you—now I am happy."

The next day father and son set out to return to Riverton. Half-way between that town and Brookville, and within a few miles of the insane asylum where James Dougall was confined, they found an old, deserted hut.

Here they decided to make a temporary home, and thence the father made flying visits to the various towns, mostly

at night, securing what information he could concerning Alston and Rawson.

Frank and his father talked over a plan that night whereby the plotters would be compelled to bring Dougall before a magistrate and show cause why he should continue to be shut up in the asylum.

Onaloka, the Indian half-breed, who happened to be passing at the time, overheard the conversation between father and son, and also found out where the treasure was concealed. He went straightway to Robert Aston and informed him of what he had heard. The next morning Frank's father arose early and left the cabin. The moment he disappeared, the Indian half-breed and the asylum keeper came into view and made directly for the cabin. Frank took down a gun and threatened to shoot the men if they advanced too near. It was their intention to keep Frank from going to Brookville in the afternoon to testify in Dougall's case, and at the same time to steal the treasure, which they knew was concealed near-by.

They made a rush, tore the gun out of his grasp, and bound the boy hand and foot. The men then secured the treasure and started off, after thrusting Frank in a bunk in one corner of the cabin and locking the door. They had not gone a hundred yards before they ran into Frank's father and a party of friends. They secured the villains and released Frank from his bonds and carried the treasure to a place of safety.

Alston was confronted in court at the hearing of Dougall's case the next day, and Mr. Marvin proved to the magistrate's satisfaction that Dougall should be removed from the control of Rawson and Alston. It was also proved that these men had instigated the attempted theft of the treasure, and were both held over for trial.

Two weeks after the trial and the rescue of Frank Marvin affairs had assumed their wonted serenity at Brookville.

The sensation of the day, the Alston case, had been investigated and discussed, and had terminated in the restoration to liberty of the unfortunate James Dougall.

Dougall, with the treasure and his reclaimed property, was a rich man. He insisted on rewarding Frank and his father, but Mr. Marvin had considerable money of his own and refused this grateful offer.

He and Frank went West to work a mine he had abandoned years previous.

One bright winter day a crowd of boys were playing at snowball near the academy, when a stranger leaped into their midst, and, taking side with the weaker party in the mimic battle, soon drove their antagonists to the wall.

A moment later he was recognized.

"Frank! Frank! It's Frank Marvin!" went up a joyous shout.

It was, indeed, the old friend of the club returned to Brookville, and this time to stay.

He had an exciting story to tell. He and his father had worked a mine, gained a small fortune, and intended to locate at Brookville.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 43, is entitled "His One Ambition; or, The Mishaps of a Boy Reporter."



## BOYS WHO SUCCEED.

### THE ROLL OF HONOR.

**EDITORIAL NOTE.**—Under this general head we purpose, in each issue of our bright weekly, to give a brief but interesting account of boys who to-day are forging to the front through earnest application, honesty, and integrity. We cordially invite our readers to assist us in making this department a wholesome feature. If you know of some lad who is surely climbing the ladder of success, no matter what his line of business may be—messenger, mechanic, law student, or a scholar in school—send us an account of what he has already done, together with what he aims to accomplish, and we will be pleased to publish it. Try and enclose a photograph when possible. Remember, this department is open to all our readers, but it would be well to have the facts as given endorsed by some responsible person in order to avoid mistakes.

No. 41.

### HENRY McDONALD.

We have this week the life of a young man who has cut out for himself an unusual mode of getting a living. He is a balloonist, and makes ascents at county fairs and other rural places of amusement, and finds it a very lucrative occupation.

The young man has been interested in the subject of



aerial navigation ever since he can remember, and has shown a pronounced talent for making investigations in that line.

Henry was born in Davenport, Iowa, twenty-five years ago, and lived there until he reached the age of sixteen. His parents then came to Chicago, and stayed in that city for five years, when the family moved to New York City. As Mr. McDonald was a man of considerable means, and took an interest in the subject that possessed such a fascination for his son, he was liberal in supplying money for various experiments that Henry made from time to time.

Father and son would frequently work side by side for hours at a time in their workshop in the barn, experi-

menting with gas-bags and motors, endeavoring to invent something that would be an improvement on the apparatus of others who were pursuing the same kind of scientific investigations without definite results. Many a night Mrs. McDonald would look out of her window at one and two o'clock in the morning and see a light in the barn, and hear the "tap-tap" of a hammer and other indications of a feverish application to an absorbing hobby on the part of father and son. It often happened on Saturdays, when Henry did not have to attend school, that he and his father would spend the whole day in their workshop, tinkering away at some new invention, and forgetting to mind the call for dinner.

Henry had his attention first directed to the subject that has since become his ruling passion by seeing a man at a country fair jump out of a balloon and descend to the ground while hanging to a parachute. He expressed a desire to be allowed to go up with the man the next day, when he was to give another exhibition. His parents, of course, made objections to anything like this, but the boy was so much in earnest that they were finally persuaded to allow him to gratify his desire when the aeronaut assured them that no harm would come to the lad. He enjoyed making the ascent so much that he resolved right on the spot that he would become an aeronaut himself when he got older. From that time on he had that idea in mind, and never lost sight of his aim to adopt ballooning as a profession.

When he went to the high school he made a specialty of physics and chemistry. He also set up a private laboratory in his father's barn, where he began to experiment with different kinds of gases, and made tests with silk and other kinds of cloth to find out which were best for his ballooning experiments.

It was at this time that his father became interested in what the young man was doing, and took an active part in the work. It was not long before they had built a balloon which seemed to accord with their ideas of what was required to overcome certain difficulties that had retarded the investigations of others working in the same field. Their first ascent in Chicago was a success, and gave them so much encouragement that they decided to begin experimenting with air-ships.

Henry then decided to go to Paris as an assistant of Santos Dumont to learn all he could about that man's wonderful improvements in air-ships.

After remaining with the Brazilian aeronaut for a few months, the young man returned to his workshop in New York, where his father had removed during Henry's stay in France, and began to work on a dirigible balloon. He was anxious to solve the problem of controlling a machine in the air, and making it respond to the will of the operator to such an extent that he could steer any course while traveling through the clouds. So far, he has not been able to do so, but he is now working on some secret experiments, which he hopes will enable him to demonstrate in the course of a few months that a machine can be devised which an operator can steer and keep under absolute control an indefinite period in the air.

In the meantime Henry is making considerable money giving exhibitions with his small balloon at country fairs and other places of amusements. We expect to hear great things of this young man in a very short time, and that his inventive genius has contributed largely to the development of aerial navigation.







# THE FAVORITE LIST OF FIVE-CENT LIBRARIES



## Might and Main

These are stories of the adventures of boys who succeeded in climbing the ladder of fame by honest effort. No more interesting tales can be imagined. Each number is at least one-third longer than the ordinary five-cent library.

## ROUGH RIDER WEEKLY



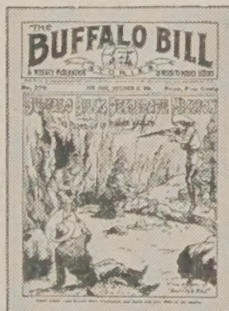
Ted Strong was appointed deputy marshal by accident, but he resolves to use his authority and rid his ranch of some very tough bullies. He does it in such a slick way that everyone calls him "King of the Wild West" and he certainly deserves his title. \$100 in cash are given to the readers of this publication, every three months. Buy a copy and learn how to come in for a share of it.

## DIAMOND DICK WEEKLY

The demand for stirring stories of Western adventure is admirably filled by this library. Every up-to-date boy ought to read just how law and order are established and maintained on our Western plains by Diamond Dick, Bertie, and Handsome Harry.



## BUFFALO BILL STORIES



Buffalo Bill is the hero of a thousand exciting adventures among the Redskins. These are given to our boys only in the Buffalo Bill Stories. They are bound to interest and please you.

## NICK CARTER WEEKLY

We know, boys, that there is no need of introducing to you Nicholas Carter, the greatest sleuth that ever lived. Every number containing the adventures of Nick Carter has a peculiar, but delightful, power of fascination.



## BRAVE AND BOLD



Every boy who prefers variety in his reading matter, ought to be a reader of Brave and Bold. All these were written by authors who are past masters in the art of telling boys' stories. Every tale is complete in itself.

## BOWERY BOY LIBRARY

The adventures of a poor waif whose only name is "Bowery Billy." Billy is the true product of the streets of New York. No boy can read the tales of his trials without imbibing some of that resource and courage that makes the character of this homeless boy stand out so prominently.



## The Tip Top Weekly

Frank Merriwell and his brother Dick are known and loved by over one hundred and fifty thousand of the best boys in the United States. They are both clean-cut, vigorous fellows who dare to do right no matter what the consequences. Get the current number. We are sure you will like it.

